

ENQA AGENCY REVIEW

**FINNISH
EDUCATION
EVALUATION
CENTRE
(FINEEC)**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report results from an external review assessing the compliance of Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (Kansallinen koulutuksen arviointikeskus, FINEEC) against the 2015 Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). As it is already the third review of FINEEC, the review approach also reflects the developmental dimension and considers the impact of organizational changes that happened close to the last review. FINEEC is a member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and is also listed in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR). While Finnish institutions are free to choose other agencies, FINEEC is the only institution in Finland responsible for external quality assurance in the field of higher education (HE). FINEEC operates on a national level with some international activities in the form of reviews and as part of European projects. This external review report is based on the review process that primarily used FINEEC's self-assessment report, a virtual site visit of the ENQA appointed review panel, and published information available on FINEEC's website.

FINEEC's evaluation activities cover institutional reviews, field specific accreditations for engineering programmes (EUR-ACE) and thematic evaluations with different focus points. While FINEEC operates administratively as part of the National Agency for Education (EDUFI), the operational use of its budget remains within its self-governing responsibility. Being funded primarily from public funding, FINEEC also charges parts of its expenses for the reviews to institutions.

Based not only on the written documentation and numerous evidences reviewed by the panel of experts, but considering the stakeholder interviews and impressions while talking to FINEEC staff, it became obvious that FINEEC is a well-respected institution in the HE system of Finland, and that it enjoys trust by institutions and stakeholders. Its mission goes beyond the evaluation of individual institutions and is strongly enhancement oriented. It also supports the enhancement of the sector and provides (well respected) independent expertise addressing relevant topics in the field of education. The panel compliments FINEEC also for its self-reflective and open approach towards this external review, which is seen as an indicator of an internal quality culture which also enables internal enhancement through dialogue. It became obvious that FINEEC not only followed the recommendations from the last review but managed well to use this development to make stakeholder interaction and involvement a strength and benefit from this increased dialogue.

The panel found FINEEC to be a mature agency, well aware of the need to continuously develop while managing well to soundly interact with the institutions and other stakeholders. It seemed to the panel that many aspects relevant in this review are implemented by FINEEC not merely for the purpose of ESG compliance, but because the key principles of the ESG have become inherent part of the quality definition within FINEEC.

The panel found FINEEC to be fully compliant with all but one standard of the ESG, which is ESG 2.7, for which the panel assesses FINEEC to be substantially compliant.

The panel believes that FINEEC has succeeded very well over the past years to establish and develop its role as a trusted partner in supporting the quality enhancement of the Finnish higher education institutions. The panel hopes that its analyses and recommendations will support FINEEC in continuing to do so.

INTRODUCTION

This report analyses the compliance of the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (Kansallinen koulutuksen arviointikeskus, FINEEC) with the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)*. It is based on an external review conducted between June 2021 and February 2022. In the introductory part describing the system and activities, particularly when no other references are made, the report strongly builds on the text and information from the SAR delivered by FINEEC.

BACKGROUND OF THE REVIEW AND OUTLINE OF THE REVIEW PROCESS

BACKGROUND OF THE REVIEW

ENQA's regulations require all member agencies to undergo an external cyclical review, at least once every five years, in order to verify that they act in compliance with the ESG as adopted at the Yerevan ministerial conference of the Bologna Process in 2015.

As this is FINEEC's third review, the panel is expected to provide clear evidence of results in all areas and to acknowledge progress from the previous review. The panel recognizes that the first review in 2010 still addressed the institution as FINHEEC and that shortly before the second review institutional adjustments were made and formed FINEEC as it is today. As in its new structure, the review focuses on the activities of FINEEC's Unit of Higher Education and Liberal Adult Education. The panel has adopted a developmental approach, as the Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews aim at constant enhancement of the agencies.

MAIN FINDINGS OF THE 2016 REVIEW

ESG 3.1

To increase the relevance of its work also for other actors beyond the HE institutions, FINEEC is recommended to consider how it could strengthen the involvement of social partners in its governing bodies, and ensure a transparent and systematic dialogue and coordination with key stakeholders at the national level, especially the most important labour market organisations, and even with the relevant officials in the Ministry of Education and Culture.

ESG 3.4

FINEEC is recommended to quickly initiate the planned thematic analyses and allocate the necessary resources to this activity so that the development of the audit model for the third round can be based on solid knowledge and reflections on the results and experiences from the second round.

ESG 2.1

FINEEC is recommended to take into account the new ESG when developing the new audit model for the third round, so that a clear link between the audit targets and the ESG part I is established.

ESG 2.2

It is recommended that FINEEC supplements its comprehensive efforts in engaging the broad higher education community in the development of the next audit model with more direct consultations with the main stakeholders at the national level, e.g. the rectors' conferences, the social partners and the Ministry, in order to ensure support and consensus about the model.

REVIEW PROCESS

The 2021 external review of FINEEC was conducted in line with the process described in the *Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews* and in accordance with the timeline set out in the Terms of Reference. The panel for the external review of FINEEC was appointed by ENQA and composed of the following members:

- Bryan Maguire (Chair), Director of Quality Assurance at QQI, Ireland (ENQA nominee);
- Ronny Heintze (Secretary), Commissioner for International Affairs at AQAS, Germany (ENQA nominee);
- Terhi Nokkala, Senior Researcher at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland (EUA nominee);
- Simona Zamfir, Medical Student, Romania (Member of the European Students' Union Quality Assurance Student Experts Pool)

Maria Kelo coordinated the review on behalf of the ENQA Secretariat. The panel is thankful to the support delivered by Maria Kelo, allowing the panel to process the review in a well-structured way.

The review followed the generally practiced sequence which includes the agency producing a self-assessment report (SAR) that is then reviewed by a nominated panel of international experts who use a (in this case virtual) site visit to interview relevant stakeholders. The interviews aim at clarifying and gathering additional evidence. Based on the SAR, the information captured during the interviews together with additional information presented to the team, the panel produced the following review report.

Self-assessment report

As described in the self-assessment report (SAR), it was produced collaboratively by the staff of FINEEC's Unit of Higher Education and Liberal Adult Education. The self-assessment process included self-assessment exercises conducted with the unit staff, the FINEEC Higher Education Evaluation Committee, the FINEEC Committee for Engineering Education, and the FINEEC management team. The self-assessment with the Higher Education Evaluation Committee was conducted in connection with a wider discussion concerning the future of external quality assurance of higher education in Finland. The self-assessment of the unit staff focused on the quality audits and thematic evaluations. The self-assessment concerning the EUR-ACE engineering programme accreditations was conducted with the FINEEC Committee for Engineering Education. In their self-assessment exercise, the FINEEC management team focused on the general aspects of FINEEC activities, especially from the viewpoint of ESG Part 3.

Writing responsibilities for individual chapters were divided between unit staff members and the Head of Unit. Responsibilities were divided according to current responsibilities and interests. All unit staff, FINEEC management team and the members of the Higher Education Evaluation Committee were given the opportunity to comment on the report. The report was edited by a core team.

Site visit

The site visit was originally planned to take place physically at FINEEC premises in Helsinki. Due to global travel restrictions and the impact of COVID 19, all parties involved agreed to hold the site visit in online format. In addition to the comprehensive SAR and extensive annexes, the panel of experts requested additional documents as evidence prior to the site visit and FINEEC delivered the

documentation well in advance of the visit. The site visit took place in an online format from 6- 9 September 2021 following an initial meeting of the panel with the agency resource person on 31 August 2021. Some days prior to the visit the panel met for an internal meeting to discuss and agree on issues that required further discussion and clarification during the interviews as well as to request additional evidence where needed.

Starting on 6 September, there were 11 meetings with different stakeholders with relevance to the activities of FINEEC. These meetings included sessions with the:

- Management team of FINEEC and the Chair of the Evaluation Council,
- FINEEC working group responsible for the SAR,
- Higher Education Evaluation Committee,
- FINEEC Committee for Engineering Education
- FINEEC staff from the Unit of Higher Education and Liberal Arts,
- Social Partners of FINEEC,
- Rectors of evaluated institutions,
- Quality management officers of reviewed institutions,
- Reviewers of FINEEC,
- Representatives of the National Union of University Students in Finland (SYL) and the Union of Students in Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences (SAMOK),
- Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC).

A full list of meetings, which all used the English language, including the names of interviewees, can be found in Annex I to this report.

HIGHER EDUCATION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM OF THE AGENCY

HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

Finland has a binary higher education system and an extensive network of higher education institutions (HEIs) covering the whole country. Universities conduct scientific research and provide higher education based on research. In carrying out their missions, universities are expected to engage with the surrounding society and strengthen the impact of research findings and artistic activities on society. The universities of applied sciences (UASs) are professionally oriented higher education institutions. The UAS system was established in the early 1990s through mergers of former vocational and higher post-secondary colleges. The first universities of applied sciences began to operate on a permanent basis in 1996. The UASs offer professionally oriented education in response to labour market needs as well as conduct research, development, and innovation (RDI), which supports education and is geared to the needs of business and industry.

Finland is geographically large in relation to its population and offering opportunities for higher education in the whole country has been a part of overall regional policy and is also linked to equal opportunities. Higher education is offered by 14 universities and 24 universities of applied sciences (UASs). Most of the HEIs operate under the governance and steering of the Ministry of Education and Culture.

The universities are prescribed in the Universities Act (558/2009). The UASs have operating licences awarded by the Ministry. The UASs are limited companies. Finnish universities and universities of applied sciences enjoy rather extensive autonomy. The operations of the higher education institutions are built on the principles of freedom of education and research. The HEIs decide on their internal organisational structure as well as steering, funding, and quality systems.

The Finnish higher education sector has been subject to major reforms during the past decades. The number of higher education institutions has declined between 2008 and 2021 from 50 to 38 through mergers (universities from 21 to 14 and UASs from 29 to 24). In addition to structural changes, in the last decade both sectors of higher education have undergone several big reforms: they have received new legislation (Universities Act 558/2009, Universities of Applied Sciences Act 932/2014), and new legal status (universities are no longer state institutions, UASs became limited companies), in addition to undergoing organisational changes (e.g. in management and decision-making systems). Furthermore, the performance-based funding systems for both sectors have been revised several times, with the latest revisions for both sectors effective from the beginning of 2021.

The key objective of Finland's higher education policy is to have internationally competitive institutions that also respond to the needs of the regions. The national policy objectives for HEIs (MEC 2021a) clearly outline the role of HEIs as key actors in promoting competitiveness, well-being, education and culture, and sustainable development of the Finnish society. The HEIs are expected to anticipate and support the renewal of society, education, culture, and working life while meeting the needs of the labour market in terms of a qualified workforce. In line with this, HEIs should develop their activities as international and attractive learning and research environments.

In 2017, a vision for higher education and research in 2030 and a roadmap for implementing Vision 2030 were drawn up by the Ministry of Education and Culture together with the higher education community and stakeholders. The implementation of the development programmes of the road map began in 2019. From the perspective of higher education, the most important objectives are increasing the proportion of those with a higher education degree to 50% of the cohort, strengthening continuous learning, and increasing cooperation with upper secondary education institutions.

Finland does not have a degree programme accreditation system. Making decisions on educational responsibilities falls within the Government's duties and is a core area of higher education policy. Provisions on the universities' educational responsibilities are laid down in the Government Decree on University Degrees (794/2004 with later amendments) and the Decree of the Ministry of Education and Culture on Specifying Educational Responsibilities (1451/2014 with later amendments). For opening degree education in a totally new field, universities must make a proposal to the Ministry of Education and Culture. The educational responsibilities of universities of applied sciences are set down in their operating licences. HEIs decide on the detailed contents and structure of the degrees they award. They also decide on their curricula and forms of instruction. Some fields have detailed regulations for the structure and/or content of the degrees awarded, such as medical education and teacher education.

Universities provide bachelors, masters, and doctoral degrees. A bachelor's degree consists of at least 180 ECTS (3 years of full-time study). A master's degree consists of at least 120 ECTS (2 years of full-time study). In the fields of medicine, veterinary medicine and dentistry the second-cycle degree is called a licentiate. In the fields of medicine and dentistry, universities may arrange the education leading to the second-cycle licentiate degree without including a first-cycle university degree in the education. In medicine the degree consists of 360 ECTS (six years of full-time study) and in dentistry the degree consists of 330 ECTS (5.5 years of full-time study). Once students have been admitted to a bachelor's programme, universities offer them direct access to a master's programme in the same field. However, this is dependent on the university's decision. Students can apply for doctoral studies after the completion of a relevant second-cycle degree. The doctor's degree consists of 4 years of full-time study after the second-cycle degree or 2 years following the pre-doctoral degree.

Universities of applied sciences provide bachelor's and master's degrees. The UAS bachelor's degree consists of 180, 210, 240 or 270 ECTS (3 to 4,5 years of full-time study) depending on the study field.

The UAS master's degree consists of 60 or 90 ECTS (1 or 1.5 years of full-time study). Applicants eligible to apply for a UAS master's degree programme must hold a relevant bachelor's degree and at least 2 years of relevant work or artistic experience. The focus of the educational provision of universities of applied sciences is on bachelor's degrees. Several UASs also offer vocational teacher education leading to a teacher qualification. The teacher education is aimed for those who already have a higher education degree from the relevant field.

HEIs select their own students. Different types of entrance examinations are commonly used. However, national regulations (Universities Act and Universities of Applied Sciences Act) prescribe general principles for student admission (e.g. the equal treatment of applicants). Also, the eligibility for studies leading to the different HE degrees is prescribed at the national level. The application procedure is arranged through a national electronic application system. In certain cases, HEIs can also arrange separate admissions if defined in the national regulations. HEIs are obliged to reserve an admission quota for the applicants who do not yet have a HE degree from a Finnish HEI or a right to study for a degree in a Finnish HEI. Exceptions are possible when the student intake is very small. Applicants can accept only one study place per year.

HEIs are obliged to recognise prior studies and learning. However, as the legal obligation has been defined only in broad terms, the processes, methods as well as level of recognition may vary in practice. The recognition decisions are made by HEIs. HEIs decide on their own regulations concerning recognition.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

The Finnish national quality assurance framework of higher education comprises three actors. The higher education institutions, FINEEC and the Ministry of Education and Culture. Higher education institutions carry the main responsibility for the quality and development of education, research, and other activities. The Universities of Applied Science's Act (932/2014) and the Universities Act (558/2009) state in similar and general terms the responsibilities of the HEIs in terms of the external evaluation and quality assurance: the universities and universities of applied sciences must regularly participate in external evaluations of their activities and quality assurance systems. The universities and universities of applied sciences must publish the results of the evaluations they have organised.

The legislation does not specify the agencies qualified for the task of external evaluation of Finnish HEIs. That is, the HEIs have the option to choose another agency to conduct their external evaluations. However, so far, all Finnish higher education institutions (except one in the second cycle) have participated in the first and second audit cycle (or round) of quality audits conducted by FINEEC (and its predecessor FINHEEC). The role of FINEEC is to assist higher education institutions in the development of higher education and quality management by conducting external evaluations. The main external quality assurance mechanism of Finnish HEIs has been the quality audits implemented since 2005.

FINEEC

FINEEC was formed in 2014 by merging the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council (FINHEEC), the Finnish Education Evaluation Council and the National Board of Education's Unit for Evaluation of Learning Outcomes. FINEEC is the single body responsible for evaluation of all educational sectors, from early childhood to higher education, as well as vocational and adult education in Finland. FINEEC's predecessor in higher education, FINHEEC, operated from January 1st 1996 until April 31st 2014. All its activities and personnel were included in the merging process. Prior to the merger, FINHEEC's tasks and goals remained largely unchanged throughout the lifespan of the organisation for nearly two

decades. One of the key purposes was to ensure the independence of evaluations by separating external evaluations of higher education from the activities of the MEC.

FINEEC was first established as an independent authority but was in 2018 made a separate unit of the Finnish National Agency for Education together with the Office of Matriculation Examination Board. The argument behind this move was to create synergy and effective use of resources while ensuring the operational independence of FINEEC and the Matriculation Examination Board. FINEEC underlines that as a separate unit it has kept the independence of its evaluation operations.

Along the developments in the HE sector, in its history, FINHEEC/FINEEC offered different types of evaluations presented in the following table:

Evaluation type	Duration
Evaluations for granting UAS operating licenses	1995–1999
Accreditation of professional courses	1999–2007
Institutional evaluations of institutions	1992–2004
Centres of Excellence evaluations	1996–2012
1 st cycle of quality audits	2005–2011
2 nd cycle of quality audits	2012–2018
3 rd cycle of quality audits	2018–2024
Thematic evaluations, including evaluations of fields of study	1997–
EUR-ACE accreditations of engineering degree programmes	2014–

FINEEC'S ORGANISATION/STRUCTURE

FINEEC operates as a separate unit within the Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI) with independence in terms of its operations. EDUFI provides FINEEC some administrative and support services, such as HR, financial, legal, procurement and data management services.

FINEEC comprises the Evaluation Council, the Higher Education Evaluation Committee and four units: General Education and Early Childhood Education Unit, Vocational Education Unit, Higher Education and Liberal Adult Education Unit, and Development Services Unit. FINEEC has approximately 50 staff members of which 8 are engaged in evaluations of higher education. The main office and most of the staff are in Helsinki, and some staff are located in Jyväskylä.

The Evaluation Council is the strategic decision-making body of FINEEC. The Government Decree (1317/2013) on FINEEC prescribes the composition, tasks and decision-making powers of the Council.

The tasks of the Council are the following:

- To take part in strategic planning of the Centre's activities;
- To decide on important statements and proposals with far-reaching implications;
- To prepare a proposal for the National Education Evaluation Plan and changes to it;
- To prepare a proposal for the Ministry of Education and Culture on Committees under the Council.

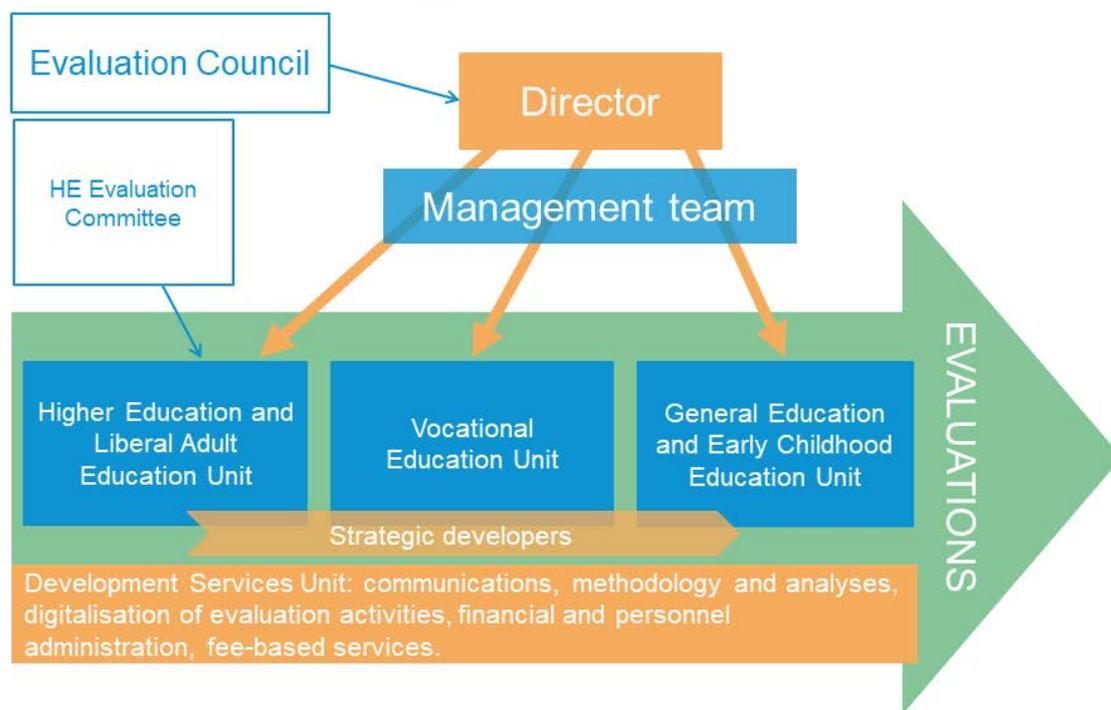
The Director formally decides, after consultation with the Council, on all project plans for evaluations and compositions of planning and evaluation teams for all education sectors apart from higher education. The Council members are representatives from different educational sectors, teacher education, research, working life and students. The Council selects the chair and vice-chair from among its members. The composition of the Council for the term 7 September 2018–31 May 2022 is publicly available on the FINEEC website.

The Higher Education Evaluation Committee is the decision-making body for higher education evaluations and consists of nine members of which three must also be members of the Council. According to the Government Decree, the Council proposes members for the Evaluation Committee and the Ministry of Education and Culture appoints them. The Council makes its selection from the candidates put forward by the higher education institutions and other stakeholders. The members must be experts in the evaluation of higher education. The Evaluation Committee also selects the chair and vice-chair from among its members. The Evaluation Committee decides on:

- Project plans and compositions of planning and evaluation teams for evaluations of higher education institutions;
- Outcomes of audits of higher education institutions.

FINEEC's organisational structure is explained in the following graphic:

FINEEC's organisational structure



FINEEC'S FUNCTIONS, ACTIVITIES, AND PROCEDURES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The three evaluation types of higher education relevant for the review are:

1. Quality audits of higher education institutions (HEIs)
2. Thematic evaluations
3. EUR-ACE engineering programme accreditations.

Quality audit

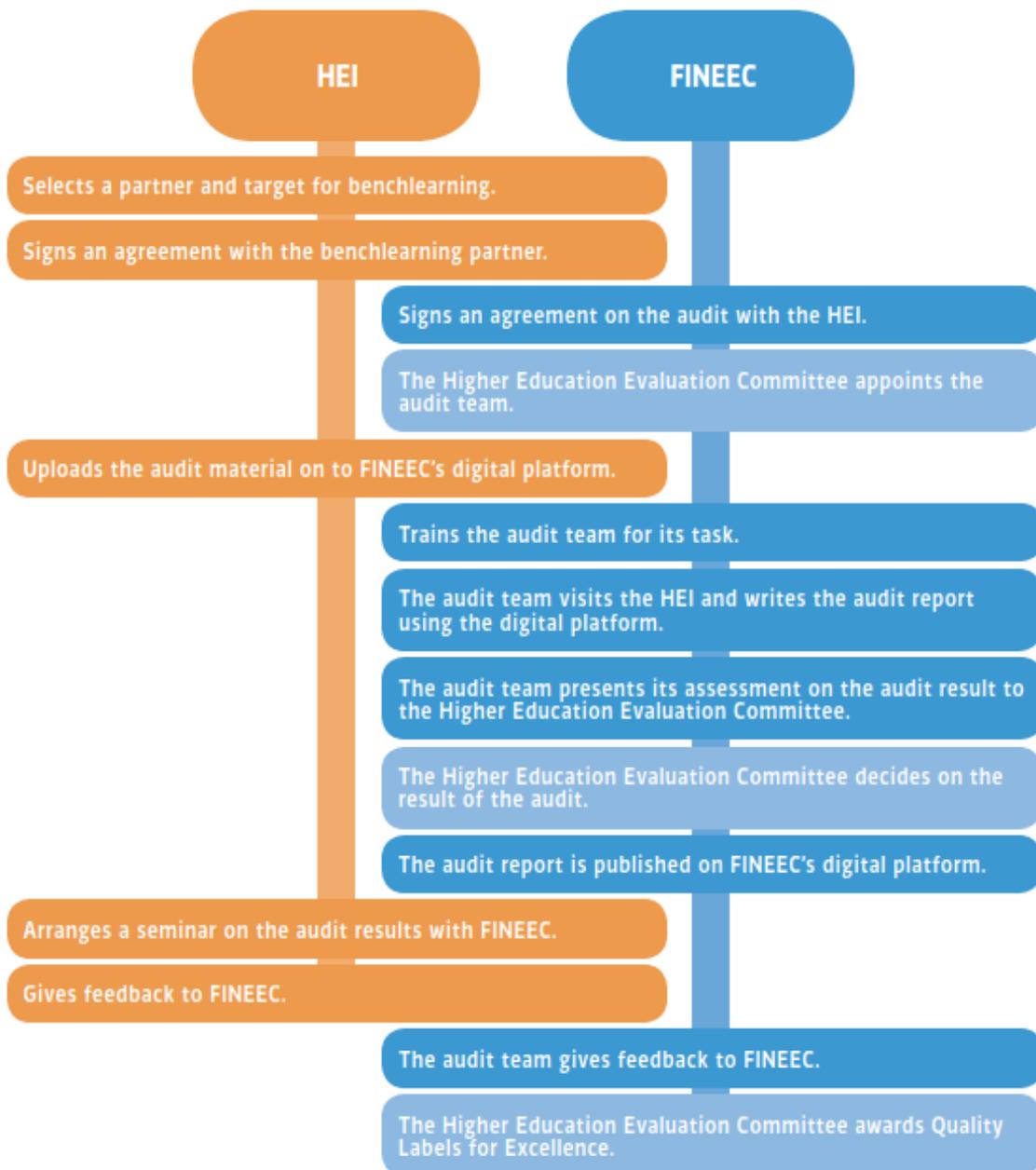
Quality audit is the main external quality assurance mechanism offered by FINEEC. The focus of the Finnish audit framework has been holistic and covered not only educational provision but also research/RDI and societal engagement and impact since the beginning of the first cycle of audits in 2005. The Finnish approach has been to support the continuous development and improvement of the activities of HEIs as a whole. The areas audited and assessment criteria have been modified along with the development of quality management at HEIs. The audit frameworks and criteria have been planned and developed together with representatives of HEIs, students, and working life. Feedback has also been systematically collected from the audit teams and HEIs to support the development of the agency's evaluation activities.

The third cycle of audits is now under way and ends in 2024. The pilot audits were conducted between 2018 and 2019, and the cycle started after the pilot phase in autumn 2020. At the end of August 2021, seven audits of HEIs have been conducted with the new framework. One of the seven is a cross-border audit.

The purpose of the third cycle audit framework is

- to evaluate whether the quality work in the HEI meets the European quality assurance standards,
- to assess whether the quality system produces relevant information for the implementation of the strategy and the continuous development of the HEI's activities and whether it results in effective enhancement activities,
- to encourage internationalisation, experimenting and a creative atmosphere at HEIs, and
- to accumulate open and transparent information on quality work at Finnish HEIs.

The procedure is defined as follows:



The process and methodology in cross-border audits are the same as in the audits of Finnish HEIs. In cross-border audits, it is possible to consider some changes in the audit framework and process, for instance, if there are specific national requirements ascribed in the legislation. Changes in the

framework and process are discussed and decided during the agreement process between FINEEC and the HEI.

The main data in the audits consist of the self-assessment, other materials requested by the audit team, and the data collected during the audit visit interviews and workshops with various actors (management, staff, students, board and stakeholders). The audit team also has access to the HEI's intranet.

For the third cycle of audits FINEEC introduced a new element of benchlearning in its methodology. This was introduced to encourage HEIs to receive feedback on its activities and to learn from good practices of another organisation. As part of this process the HEI selects a target and a partner that can be a HEI or any other type of cooperation organisation and compares processes, procedures or activities as part of the benchlearning exercise.

Thematic Evaluations

Thematic evaluations of FINEEC are conducted according to the National Education Evaluation Plan (FINEEC 2016; 2021). The themes cover areas that are important from the perspective of educational policy. The aim of thematic evaluations is to produce information to support decision-making and the development of education in Finland. A thematic evaluation may focus on a single field of education or cover the whole higher education sector. FINEEC also implements thematic evaluations covering various educational levels (such as general upper secondary education and higher education).

The evaluations of fields of study produce an overall picture of the strengths and development areas in the examined degree programmes as well as the field in general in relation to the competence produced by the qualifications. They also consider their relevance for working life and continuous learning. The evaluations also produce information on how HEIs develop their educational offer in correspondence to the changing requirements for competences and the future operating environments.

Examples for topics covered by thematic evaluations in the past years are:

- Impacts of the exceptional teaching arrangements on the realisation of equality and equity at different levels of education (Covid-19)
- UNESCO IIEP Projects on Flexible Learning Pathways in Higher Education. Finland's country case study
- Evaluation on field of study: Humanities, social sciences, technology and business
- Students with an immigrant background in higher education
- Entrepreneurship in vocational education and training and in higher education
- Evaluation on field of study: Undergraduate medical education
- International comparison of the integration of immigrants into the education system

According to the Manual for Thematic Evaluation, there are the following phases in FINEEC's thematic evaluation process:

1. Preparation

- setting up a project team (FINEEC experts)
- collecting background information
- defining the expertise required by the project

2. Planning and designing

- recruiting and nominating a planning team (FINEEC experts, external experts and representatives of education providers/HEIs)

- stakeholder hearings
- operationalisation of the evaluation theme and targets
- defining the evaluation questions
- selecting data collection methods
- defining and choosing criteria
- designing data collection
- designing the project schedule and project plan for evaluation

3. Implementation

- recruiting and nominating the evaluation/implementation team (FINEEC experts, external experts and representatives of education providers/HEIs)
- data collection (participatory methods are often used)
- coding the data
- analysing the data
- writing up results and recommendations
- publishing the evaluation report
- disseminating (and distributing) the results and recommendations

4. Feedback and follow-up

- collecting feedback from the evaluation team and education providers/HEIs
- possible follow-up evaluation.

The methods in thematic evaluations are always tailored according to the objectives and theme of the evaluation. The key is to consider the perspectives of various stakeholders, study the phenomenon critically and profoundly, and form a comprehensive understanding of the evaluation targets.

Compared to the thematic evaluations carried out in FINHEEC (-2014), a wider range of data is now used in thematic evaluations. The evaluations are based on data obtained by using a number of qualitative and quantitative methods and by working together with higher education institutions, students and stakeholders.

EUR-ACE engineering programme accreditations

Engineering programme accreditation is a degree programme specific evaluation leading to the international EUR-ACE Label. The accreditation aims to support the development of quality in engineering degree programmes and increase international comparability and recognition of Finnish engineering degrees in the industry. Higher education institutions may utilise engineering degree programme accreditations to get an external view of how well the students in a programme receive the knowledge and skills required by the labour market. In addition, higher education institutions typically use the accreditations in their marketing of the degree programmes.

The accreditation method is based on the European Accredited Engineer (EUR-ACE) standard administered by the European Network for Accreditation of Engineering Education (ENAE). Accredited programmes are granted the EUR-ACE Label, which is valid for six years from the accreditation decision. It is also possible to award conditional accreditation, where the degree programme is expected to meet the conditions set in a specified timeframe.

The review process step by step is the following:

- The HEI makes a request for accreditation of a particular engineering degree programme. FINEEC and the HEI make a contract on the accreditation.
- The degree programme to be accredited prepares a self-assessment report along with the appendices.

- The accreditation team is appointed by the FINEEC Committee for Engineering Education.
- FINEEC trains the accreditation team members.
- The degree programme to be accredited submits the self-assessment report to FINEEC one month prior to the on-site or online visit. In addition, the HEI provides access to its intranet for the accreditation team members and the FINEEC project manager.
- The accreditation team examines the self-assessment material and decides whether there is need for additional material. If additional material is required, the FINEEC project manager informs the degree programme about this.
- The accreditation team agrees on the on-site/online visit programme. The project manager informs the degree programme about it.
- The degree programme invites the interviewees to the interviews to be carried out during the on-site/online visit
- The accreditation team prepares the interview questions jointly for the on-site/online visit.
- The degree programme prepares the evidence room for the on-site/online visit. For an online visit, the evidence room is offered in electronic form.
- The degree programme plans the facilities tour to be conducted during the on-site visit. In case of an online visit, the degree programme is required to produce a recorded video tour of its key facilities (e.g. labs, library, classrooms).
- The two-day on-site or online visit is carried out in the HEI of the degree programme to be accredited.
- The accreditation team drafts the report and agrees on the team's proposal on the outcome of the accreditation (accredited, conditionally accredited, not accredited).
- FINEEC Committee for Engineering Education decides on the outcome of the accreditation. The chair of the accreditation team presents the key results to the Committee.
- FINEEC informs the degree programme about the decision.
- FINEEC publishes the accreditation report on its website.
- FINEEC adds the information on the accreditation to the register of the accredited programmes on its website.
- FINEEC adds the information on the accreditation to the ENAEE database.
- FINEEC gathers feedback from the HEI and the accreditation team members.

If the FINEEC Committee for Engineering Education decides on a conditional accreditation, FINEEC informs the degree programme on the conditions as well as the timeframe set for meeting the conditions. The degree programme is required to submit the report to FINEEC on the corrective actions made related to the conditions set. FINEEC delivers the report to the accreditation team chair, and the chair examines the report and writes the statement based on it. The FINEEC Committee for Engineering Education decides, based on the degree programme's report and the chair's statement, whether the conditions are met and whether the accreditation is extended to the full duration of six years.

FINEEC'S FUNDING

The activities of the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre are funded in the state budget by a separate sub-item under the branch of the Ministry of Education and Culture. The overall budget of the Centre in 2021 is approximately 4.5 million euros, of which 3.2 million euros account for labour costs. The labour costs of the Unit of Higher Education and Liberal Adult Education are approximately 640 000 euros in 2021.

The Quality Audits of higher education institutions are partially funded with fees from the institutions and from the regular budget. EUR-ACE accreditations are voluntary for the HEIs and a fee covering the costs is charged. FINEEC also regularly conducts thematic evaluations on request of and financed

by the Ministry of Education and Culture. Crossborder quality assurance projects are charged to the institutions on a full-cost basis.

THEMATIC EVALUATIONS

As per request by EQAR, part of the review was also the assessment of FINEEC's thematic evaluations for their alignment with the ESG. The panel very carefully considered to which extent this activity of the agency falls under the ESG as it could understand the approach that, also led by the title of the activity and one might suspect an ESG relevance of it.

Consequently, the panel included thematic evaluations in the discussions during the site visit in all stakeholder meetings to not only assess the activity based on its definition on paper and considering the outcomes of the published reports, but also to include the understanding and perception of this activity by the higher education community, stakeholders, and the MEC.

The panel found thematic evaluations to be an important activity of FINEEC, with which it substantially contributes to the achievement of its mission, addresses the needs of society, and provides independent analysis highly appreciated by stakeholders and decision-makers. The panel was impressed by the unanimous attribution of independent authority to FINEEC by the relevant actors, which makes FINEEC a trusted source to provide tailor made evaluations that support decision makers in areas of interest and need, regarding a broad variety of potential topics.

Based on a thorough analysis of the methodology, its scope, its implementation and also considering stakeholder perception, the panel found that thematic evaluations are however not an activity that falls under the remit of the ESG. While this conclusion is based on the panel's understanding of the totality of this activity, there are several clear indicators for the non-relevance of the ESG in this context. Firstly, this activity is not focussed solely on higher education but can also cover the whole educational sector as different provided examples underline. Secondly, the topics of evaluations result from the objectives defined in the national evaluation plan and clearly do not exclusively focus on teaching and learning in higher education. These evaluations produce different information that complement the audits and aim at sectorial and cross sectorial development. While they might in some cases also touch upon this issue, the main focus never lies on individual programmes or institutions but on broader topics that differ from case to case. Thirdly, the panel found no indication that FINEEC or any of its stakeholders label or understand this activity as an activity under the ESG. Clearly these activities include to a large extent elements that are also part of the ESG requirements (stakeholder involvement, publication of outcomes, transparency of methodology); however, these elements are not exclusive to the ESG and therefore cannot serve as constraint for ESG relevance of the activity.

The methodologies of the thematic evaluations are decided based on the questions and topics to be evaluated. As these differ, flexibility in the approach is a required consequence. ESG alignment is not fit for purpose in this case as it would not align the methodology to the task but would set methodologic requirements above the needs guiding the evaluation.

At the same time the panel found that thematic evaluations to a certain extent support the underlying intention of the ESG standard 3.4 on thematic analysis. While going way beyond the narrow understanding of this standard, the panel believes this activity is an excellent use of the knowledge and experience of FINEEC reflecting the high level of trust and perceived independence of the organization.

FINDINGS: COMPLIANCE OF FINEEC WITH THE STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA (ESG)

ESG PART 3: QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCIES

ESG 3.1 ACTIVITIES, POLICY, AND PROCESSES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE

Standard:

Agencies should undertake external quality assurance activities as defined in Part 2 of the ESG on a regular basis. They should have clear and explicit goals and objectives that are part of their publicly available mission statement. These should translate into the daily work of the agency. Agencies should ensure the involvement of stakeholders in their governance and work.

2016 review recommendation

To increase the relevance of its work also for other actors beyond the HE institutions, the panel recommends FINEEC to consider, how it could strengthen the involvement of social partners in its governing bodies and ensure a transparent and systematic dialogue and coordination with key stakeholders at the national level, especially the most important labour market organisations, and even with the relevant officials in the Ministry of Education and Culture.

Evidence

The mission and strategic objectives of FINEEC are publicly available on the FINEEC website. Following the SAR and explanations during the interviews, FINEEC's strategic goals for impact are to advance learning and the building of competences, increase equality in education, improve the education system's functionality, and develop the quality of education. These goals are primarily achieved through the different evaluative activities of the agency, particularly quality audits, EUR-ACE accreditations, and thematic evaluations. From 2017 to 2021, 26 quality audits took place (starting the third cycle with pilots in 2019), and five programmes received EUR-ACE accreditation. In the same period 15 thematic evaluations were published. The number of these activities vary from year to year, showing a certain cyclicity but also responsiveness to demand and current needs articulated towards FINEEC.

As explained in the SAR and published on its website, the key values set out in the strategy to guide the work of FINEEC are trustworthiness, independence, openness, and boldness. FINEEC explains that it bases evaluation activities on collected data and treats education providers equally. In this context during the interviews the experts learned that boldness is a new value in FINEEC. The aim is that FINEEC evaluation experts and management take an active role in societal discussions, including social media.

FINEEC's role in the Finnish higher education system is that of an evaluation body. FINEEC does not offer consultancy services for Finnish HEIs meaning that information that is produced by FINEEC is equally open to all institutions.

The SAR as well as the respective policy documents explain that stakeholders have a permanent position in FINEEC's governing bodies. Three of the members in the Higher Education Evaluation Committee come from universities, three from the universities of applied science, two from the

national student unions (SYL & SAMOK) and one from the labour market. The Evaluation Committee composition is renewed every four years. All higher education evaluation teams include experts that represent the higher education sector, students and the labour market.

Additionally, FINEEC explains in its SAR that it has well-established partner relations with Universities Finland (Unifi), the Rectors' Conference of Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences (Arene), the National Union of University Students in Finland (SYL) and Universities of Applied Sciences Students in Finland (SAMOK). These organisations provide expert candidates for FINEEC's activities and cooperate in various matters. The review panel learned during the interviews that also from the external partner perspective the dialogue with FINEEC is perceived to be vivid, open, and honest, allowing an exchange of opinions that later on also finds its reflection in FINEEC's activities.

The panel learned during interviews with institutions and other stakeholders that seminars for dissemination are highly valued. FINEEC offers such seminars regularly, whenever there is an issue to be discussed or disseminated. Planning of these activities also reflects the requirements of the national evaluation plan.

Analysis

Undoubtedly it can be confirmed that FINEEC regularly undertakes activities that fall under Part 2 of the ESG. As explained earlier, for the purpose of the assessment the focus lies on institutional evaluations and EUR-ACE accreditation, while of course when considering FINEEC it cannot be ignored that activities carried out under thematic evaluations substantially contribute to the achievement of FINEEC's mission. Particularly when interviewing stakeholders, but also institutions, there is no artificial separation between FINEEC's activities with regards to ESG relevance, as the agency is perceived holistically as a key contributor to the Finnish higher education system, in which its activities complement each other.

One key activity of FINEEC is institutional quality audits. The panel learned that FINEEC, with the intention to support enhancement of higher education in Finland, carefully considered adjustments to the evaluation focus upon completion of the second cycle of institutional reviews. This update happened with participation of and dialogue with institutions and different stakeholders in order to create a methodology for the third cycle that would support the enhancement of institutions in the best possible way. After the implementation of pilots, some updates were implemented resulting from exchange with stakeholders and reflecting FINEEC's own perception of the pilots.

As one of the involved stakeholders, FINEEC also contributes to the design of the national evaluation plan by proposing topics and areas of interest while the final decision on the plan lies with the Ministry. As mentioned earlier, in light of the overarching purpose of thematic evaluations, this is a sound approach benefiting from multi stakeholder involvement based on dialogue and exchange.

The panel is impressed by the intense dialogue between FINEEC and the different stakeholders. While the panel is aware that to a certain extent this might have been encouraged by a recommendation in the last review, based on the interviews the dialogue and exchange with stakeholders seems open and sincere. Also, it is directed in both directions, as stakeholders impact the decisions of FINEEC while the agency is also perceived as a trustworthy and independent source of information for different stakeholders including the Ministry, the Students' unions and the labour market organisations. Depending on the specific group of the external stakeholders, their interest is stronger in outcomes of the quality audits or thematic evaluations, that are generally respected amongst external stakeholders. An example that was referred to across different interviews was the review of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on education, in which FINEEC provided up-to-date information for decision-makers at different levels.

Stakeholder dialogue is complemented by stakeholder involvement in FINEEC's governance and procedures. Student involvement clearly reflects the perceived strong focus on student centredness in the sector. Also, the composition of the Higher Education Evaluation Council follows the stakeholder principle and further connects FINEEC with the sector. Across many interviews covering different topics, the panel found large alignment between perceptions of stakeholders. Some voices even explained that it is hard to come up with new topics or innovative ideas that are not somehow also reflected in discussions of stakeholders or come as a surprise to the system. With a strong and dialogue-oriented culture of open exchange that is vital for a joint and shared development of the system, of course the tendency towards consensus might also reduce fresh input. Recognizing potential language barriers, the panel still encourages FINEEC to consider including foreign/international stakeholders in their structures to ensure that new ideas and perspectives feed into the system.

Finally, it should be recognized that the panel found FINEEC to be ready to respond to the needs of the sector. Not only reactively, as e.g. with a quick adjustment of priorities in order to evaluate the impact of COVID-19, but also proactive and future oriented. The panel learned about FINEEC's openness to also look into options of further field specific programme accreditation (e.g. medicine) or evaluations in the field of European Universities in case this demand is expressed by the sector. Based on the interviews with stakeholders, there might be future opportunities for FINEEC as its experience with e.g. EUR-ACE accreditation is recognized by institutions/programmes and could serve as a basis for additional activities.

Panel commendations

FINEEC is commended for its engagement with a wide range of stakeholders through its consultation processes and dissemination activities.

FINEEC is commended for its openness and willingness to react to demands of the sector.

Panel suggestions for further improvement

While the core focus of the agency within the scope of the ESG rightly continues to be the quality audit, the agency may build on its successful experience of programme accreditation in the context of EUR-ACE to anticipate further demands for programme accreditation from HEIs. These may arise in the context of particular fields of study, such as medicine, or particular modes of provision, such as international joint programmes.

FINEEC is encouraged to consider including foreign/international stakeholders in their structures to ensure that new ideas and perspectives feed into the system.

Panel conclusion: fully compliant

ESG 3.2 OFFICIAL STATUS

Standard:

Agencies should have an established legal basis and should be formally recognised as quality assurance agencies by competent public authorities.

Evidence

In its SAR FINEEC explains that by law "The Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC) is an independent agency responsible for the evaluation of education in Finland. FINEEC carries out evaluations related to education including the operations of education providers from early childhood

education to higher education.” The provisions on the duties and organisation of FINEEC are laid down in the Act 1295/2013 and Government decree 1317/2013. It is also explained that the legislation concerning FINEEC allows the agency to operate across borders.

The Act on Finnish Evaluation Centre (Act 1295/2013) as well as the Government decree on Finnish Evaluation Centre (1317/2013) set a broad framework for the activities and governance of FINEEC. They do not specifically stipulate the types of evaluations provided; these are further stipulated in the National Evaluation Plan. Additionally, the mandate and the status of FINEEC are reflected both in the Universities Act (558/2009) and the Universities of Applied Sciences Act (932/2014).

FINEEC is a member of ENQA and is registered in the European Quality Assurance Register EQAR.

Analysis

The panel found the legal foundation clear and transparent providing a robust basis for the activities of the agency. The panel also recognized that while being based on national legislation, the Act on FINEEC also stipulates that the agency shall participate in international evaluation activities and cooperation, underlining the importance of the international dimension of FINEEC’s activities.

In addition to familiarising themselves with the FINEEC SAR and the relevant legislation, the evaluation panel discussed the legal status and recognition of FINEEC in the pre-visit meeting with the agency liaison persons, as well as in the meeting with the Ministry of Education and Culture. These interviewees reiterated the legal status and recognition of the agency. The interviews with the institutions and external stakeholders underlined that there is security on the acceptance of the outcomes of FINEEC’s procedures by the different actors. Based on the interviews with the FINEEC management as well as with the Ministry of Education and Culture, the panel found that there are at present no plans to change the legal basis of the agency’s operations.

Panel conclusion: fully compliant

ESG 3.3 INDEPENDENCE

Standard:

Agencies should be independent and act autonomously. They should have full responsibility for their operations and the outcomes of those operations without third party influence.

Evidence

Considering the organizational independence, FINEEC is formally independent under the law resulting from its status as defined in the Act on Finnish Evaluation Centre (Act 1295/2013). FINEEC operates as a separate administrative unit within the Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI). The financial independence from the host organisation is explained to be guaranteed by a separate sub-item in the state budget, which the agency can independently decide how to use.

The SAR describes that FINEEC decides independently on the implementation of the evaluations, the methods used, the members of the evaluation teams, timetables, content of reports and other decisions pertaining to higher education evaluations. Other interested parties (such as higher education institutions, ministries, and stakeholders) have no influence on FINEEC’s decisions or evaluation results.

The relevant decision-making body is the Higher Education Evaluation Committee, that is responsible for the decisions concerning higher education: (1) Project plans and composition of planning and evaluation teams for evaluations of higher education institutions and (2) Outcomes for higher education institutions.

The Higher Education Evaluation Committee is selected from the candidates put forward by HEIs and student unions. The Evaluation Council proposes the composition to the Ministry of Education and Culture, which then appoints the Committee. Three of the members come from universities, three come from the universities of applied science, two are student members and one is a representative of the labour market. The SAR explains that in the composition of the Committee also aspects of gender and regional balance as well as official languages are considered. The language balance means that at least one member comes from the Swedish-speaking minority. In case of a need to dismiss a committee member, the Evaluation Council takes the proposal to the Ministry of Education and Culture, which then acts upon it.

The SAR explains that members of FINEEC's Higher Education Evaluation Committee are not representatives of their employers (e.g. the HEIs or the unions) but represent the whole field of Finnish higher education as independent experts. In addition, FINEEC has a non-conflict-of-interest policy, whereby no person with a personal interest in the matter can have any role in the conduct of its evaluation or making decisions about it.

FINEEC explains in its SAR that it conducts its staff recruitment independently, utilising a recruitment database for governmental organisations. The Director decides on opening a new position and appoints the new employee.

The topic of operational and organizational independence was carefully discussed in several meetings with staff, members of the Higher Education Evaluation Committee, the management of the agency as well as with the Ministry and all parties described their perception of FINEECs/their operation to be independent.

Analysis

Analysing the organizational setup of FINEEC the panel found that what is written on paper indeed finds its reflection in practice. Particularly as the last review of FINEEC outlined that then implemented changes might impact the independence of the organization, the panel addressed this topic very carefully from different perspectives during various interviews.

The agency management noted that while there had been some apprehension in advance that the administrative incorporation of the agency into the agency EDUFI might compromise its independence in some way, for example in terms of resourcing, this has not been their experience. Similarly, the fact that the higher education unit sits within FINEEC alongside units evaluating other levels of education has not diminished its operational independence. The agency staff confirmed that they exercise their roles with what they considered to be appropriate professional autonomy.

Each group of interviewees that the panel met confirmed their perception that the agency is independent in its actions as well as formally under the law. None of them identified any active threat to that independence. The Ministry of Education and Culture confirmed that the value of FINEEC's activities in the context of national policy-making comes precisely from its independence and the Ministry supports this independence in its interaction with the agency, including the provision of budgetary resources. FINEEC's quality assurance activities complement other policy instruments of the Ministry in its dealing with the higher education sector, notably the funding of institutions based on individually agreed strategic goals and outputs. The panel finds that FINEEC is respected as an independent actor in the Finnish higher education system.

The key decisions are made by the Committees. The composition of the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Committee is proposed to the minister by the Evaluation Council, the overall governing body for FINEEC, based on nominations from HEIs and students' unions. The panel finds this to be a well-balanced system assuring that no single actor gains an unhealthy amount of control/influence on the agency or its proceedings.

The panel believes that independence also is supported by a strong culture of open dialogue and debate on potential risks/issues that might concern any of the involved stakeholders. The high level of coherence between the answers between different stakeholders indicate that FINEEC is embedded in the higher education system in which actors respect it for its independent position and consequently are also willing to accept the outcomes of its work. Consequently, the agency embraces this independence in its slogan "Proficient evaluator, bold debater" which seems a good description based on independent organization, operation, and implementation.

The panel also considered published evaluation reports and other communications on the agency's website to assess whether there would be any indication that could raise questions regarding independence but found evidence-based conclusions and recommendations that do not indicate any bias.

Panel conclusion: fully compliant

ESG 3.4 THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Standard:

Agencies should regularly publish reports that describe and analyse the general findings of their external quality assurance activities.

2016 review recommendation

The panel recommends FINEEC to quickly initiate the planned thematic analyses and allocate the necessary resources to this activity so that the development of the audit model for the third round can be based on solid knowledge and reflections on the results and experiences from the second round.

Evidence

The information provided in the SAR, and in the interviews with the management of the agency and with the staff, clearly indicated that the area of thematic analysis has been subject to broader discussion in the agency in the past years. As the approach towards institutional audits is a cyclical one, so far analysis of these cycles has happened towards the end of each cycle. The SAR outlines that the agency itself believes that this frequency is too low and decided to make changes to its approach. Thematic analyses have been incorporated into the national evaluation plan which is structured around key focus areas and during the evaluation plan period the aim of FINEEC is to produce a thematic analysis of these focus areas.

Two recent reports were published, one analysing the second cycle of audits and the second one summarizing the evaluations in the fields of business, humanities, technology, and social sciences. The basis for this analysis is formed by audit reports of 40 HEIs audited during the second cycle.

At the time of the review the process for implementing the agency's approach to thematic analysis of strategic focus was still in the early phase of implementation. Individual project managers are

responsible to produce summaries of the different focus areas for each evaluation project they coordinate. These summaries are analysed by FINEEC and analysis covering the four focus areas are published. This practice is implemented agency-wide, with slightly different arrangements for the upcoming third cycle of audits for higher education, in which the summaries will also cover key topics that relate to the evaluation criteria of these audits.

The interviews confirmed that the work on thematic analysis is spread horizontally across the unit, due to the high interest of staff in conducting such analyses.

Analysis

The panel acknowledges that progress has been made in the implementation of this standard. Even in a narrow interpretation of the standard the agency addresses and analyses the general findings identified in their reviews. Regarding the frequency of such analyses, it should be noted that a full audit cycle yields 40 reports as a data source and consequently frequency has to be seen in light of the actual numbers available for such an analysis. Consequently, the panel supports the proposal identified by the agency to increase the frequency of such publications. The panel also welcomes that important decisions regarding the incorporation of these analyses in the planning process have been made and that also the required debate on availability of resources was decided in a way to include all unit experts by implementing a horizontal work distribution.

Furthermore, the panel concludes that besides the very narrow understanding of the standard, the agency implements seminars that function as a synthesis of the reviews and allow institutions and stakeholders to discuss good practice and challenges based on general trends identified in reviews. While these seminars might be seen as a part of the follow up procedure, they clearly also work towards achieving the intention of this standard, as they not only disseminate information, but also support the reception of more general findings by stakeholders through engaging them in dialogue.

Lastly, the panel notes with approval those activities that are outside the scope of the ESG but which cannot be ignored when assessing to which extent this standard is fulfilled, as the agency has a separate task and activity that is referred to as thematic evaluations. While this task itself is not an activity under the ESG, to a certain extent this activity can also contribute to the achievement of the intention of the present standard on thematic analysis. The panel does not come to this conclusion based on semantic proximity, but in a reflection of the fact that FINEEC is an independent provider for information on (higher) education in Finland. The thematic evaluations are flexible in their methodology and topics (and not limited to teaching and learning in higher education – while also not per se excluding it). However, thematic evaluations arranged by FINEEC clearly build on the knowledge and experience the organization gains through institutional audits and EUR-ACE accreditations. Clearly, this allows FINEEC also to use the findings in the reports as a source of information for their evaluations and build upon them in designing methodologies for their evaluations.

The panel understands the remarks on thematic evaluations in the context of this standard as an addition to the assessment of the standard and would come to the same conclusion even without this extension.

Panel conclusion: fully compliant

ESG 3.5 RESOURCES

Standard:

Agencies should have adequate and appropriate resources, both human and financial, to carry out their work.

Evidence

Based on the information provided in the SAR, FINEEC operates administratively as part of the National Agency for Education (EDUFI), but is independent both in terms of its decision making and its funding. The panel learned during the interviews with staff and management that some of the support services, such as legal services and website maintenance, are provided through the EDUFI. FINEEC funding base is described in the SAR as well as in the FINEEC budget received by the evaluation panel. According to the SAR “the overall budget of the Centre in 2021 is approximately 4.5 million euros, of which 3.2 million euros account for labour costs. The labour costs of the Unit of Higher Education and Liberal Adult Education are approximately 640 000 euros in 2021.”

The personnel costs and the costs of the evaluation within the scope of the ESGs are funded through the state budget, by a separate sub-item under the branch of the Ministry of Education and Culture; decided annually by the Parliament of Finland. The state budget funding does not, therefore, come through EDUFI or the Ministry of Education and Culture. Additionally, the agency does receive some specifically negotiated development grants from the Ministry, aimed at given evaluations; but in 2021 none of these pertain to the area of higher education. The panel was told by the FINEEC management that FINEEC’s dependence on the state budget is alleviated by income accrued from the audits (higher education institutions pay 50% of the audit costs) and EUR-ACE accreditations, which are paid services.

Analysis

The panel carefully enquired about the availability of adequate financial resources for the implementation of the relevant activities of the department particularly recognizing that it is an integrated part of EDUFI structures. The panel also enquired about the possible reorganisation of FINEEC mentioned in the self-assessment report. In the preparatory meeting with the agency, the panel learned that while plans for reorganisation are being discussed here and there, they are in quite an early stage and there is no clear model for reorganisation. The plan, however, primarily concerns the general education and early education unit, which is much bigger than the other units. The reorganisation may therefore result in establishing a separate unit for early education. There has also been some discussions on organising the units based on the type of evaluations they offer, but the higher education and liberal adult education unit opposes this given that they feel an understanding of higher education is paramount for their operations and potentially this expertise could be hollowed out by reorganising the units thematically. The panel was assured that no specific plans are on the table and discussions reflect the continuous effort to increase quality and efficiency reflected by appropriate organizational structures. Consequently, the panel appreciates the openness in which also current debates and discussions are shared during interviews, reflecting the pursuit of openness and transparency towards the external evaluation. However, this is not currently perceived or assessed as a current risk with a relevance for the assessment in this review.

The SAR also mentions issues related to workload as “human resources are sufficient but occasionally affected by study and other leaves of absence. At times, the unit’s staff have a heavy workload, conducting audits and other evaluations simultaneously and taking care of other administrative, internal development and evaluation-related tasks.” These issues have come up in the annual VMBaro¹ survey and also in the SWOT of the SAR. On further discussion with the agency, the panel found that the agency is internally able to borrow staff across units to facilitate adequate staffing in times of need, and to conduct some activities that engage staff across different units. Resulting from these discussions the panel concludes that staffing of the unit is adequate for the current tasks and that the current

¹ VMBaro is an annual job satisfaction survey for personnel working in governmental organisations. VMBaro measures and monitors the job satisfaction of personnel, the success of the leadership and immediate superiors, and the functioning of the salary system. The survey provides average scores for job satisfaction at the FINEEC level and the unit level.

departmental structure also offers synergies as this collaborative and flexible way of working also enhances the understanding of the agency staff on education as a comprehensive and interdependent path from early childhood education to higher education. This impression was further supported by the agency staff explaining the panel about the pleasant and collegial work environment in the agency.

Nevertheless, the panel took a careful position on that issue in discussions with the Ministry to assess the level of independence and the potential use of budgetary tools to impact operations of the department to find all potential concerns inapplicable. Also, the Ministry confirmed that the evaluations within the scope of the ESGs are relatively well resourced from their point of view.

Consequently, the panel concludes that financially and also with regards to staff FINEEC is adequately funded for its operations under the ESG. At the same time the panel recognizes that for other types of activities that are not within the scope of the ESGs, such as thematic evaluations, FINEEC receives more requests than it can take on. Consequently, prioritization is part of the task. It is also important to recognize that – in line with FINEEC’s self-assessment - the international activities cannot be significantly expanded with the current personnel. Similarly, adopting new tasks such as expanding programme accreditations to other fields would require additional resources.

Panel commendations

The review panel commends the way FINEEC conducts collaborative work across different units of FINEEC to make the most of the agency’s human resources. This increases the knowledge capital of every individual FINEEC staff member and contributes to a broader understanding of education as a comprehensive system starting from early childhood education and care all the way to higher education.

Panel conclusion: fully compliant

ESG 3.6 INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

Standard:

Agencies should have in place processes for internal quality assurance related to defining, assuring and enhancing the quality and integrity of their activities.

Evidence

According to the SAR, quality management is an integral part of FINEEC’s management and steering of its activities. It is explained that quality management supports FINEEC’s strategy and the achievement of its strategic goals. The implementation of the strategy, activities and the achievement of goals are systematically evaluated. The SAR explains that FINEEC’s activities are continuously developed and improved, utilising information obtained from evaluation projects, feedback systems and external evaluations.

The SAR and sample documents provided to the panel show that the feedback systems include surveys of different stakeholders, including academics, students, HEI representatives etc. FINEEC also explains that an important element of internal QA are systematic procedures for training new staff members, which are generally the same for all new FINEEC staff, including evaluation-type specific training organised by process managers and a backup system for project managers. The panel also learned that the FINEEC working group for competence development is currently updating FINEEC’s personnel

evaluation competence development plan. During the site visit the panel also received reconfirmation that FINEEC also trains all external experts and the Higher Education Evaluation Committee members.

FINEEC has three main feedback mechanisms: (1) evaluation project feedback, (2) stakeholder survey and (3) VMBaro personnel survey. Each of these mechanisms is predefined and documented. Samples of these surveys were shared with the panel to analyse scope and focus while findings from these surveys were also discussed in the SAR and fed into the SWOT analysis.

The SAR explains that an internal Operations Development Group with members from all FINEEC units was operational between 2018 and 2020 to update the internal quality assurance procedures. One of the main tasks of the group was to develop the feedback system of FINEEC. Common feedback questionnaires for all evaluation projects and a stakeholder survey were introduced. Another aim of the operations development was to strengthen the process management and development of FINEEC's evaluations. One of the actions taken was the nomination of process managers for different evaluation types in 2019.

According to the SAR, and confirmed in the staff interviews, the panel found that development discussions with staff are organised twice a year to agree on individual work duties and competence development targets as well as to have a feedback dialogue between the staff member and his or her superior. Based on the individual discussions, collective FINEEC-level improvement areas are also defined, and development actions are agreed on as part of the management team's annual cycle. A FINEEC development day is organised annually to support the development and enhancement of topics that relate to strategic objectives of FINEEC or other key improvement areas.

FINEEC has an internal quality assurance procedure in place for its evaluation reports. All FINEEC reports are read by the Head of Unit and Director of FINEEC before publishing the report. An internal peer-reading process has also been introduced for the third-cycle audits in which one colleague from the unit (not involved in the audit project) reads and comments on the audit report. This process is intended to promote the quality and consistency of reports.

The defined procedures for institutional audits are also used for cross-border activities. FINEEC has conducted two cross-border audits so far in 2013 and 2021, and a further cross-border audit to be conducted in 2021–2022. In cross-border audits, the same principles and processes are applied concerning internal quality assurance and professional conduct as in the audits carried out in Finland.

Analysis

The panel found a comprehensive system of internal quality assurance that covers the different areas of FINEEC activities in a well-balanced and appropriate manner. FINEEC has developed clear and rigorous processes for internal quality assurance which are an inherent part in all of its activities.

The implemented quality assurance mechanisms cover the relevant activities and address the quality of the process (surveys with stakeholders) as well as the quality of the outcome (evaluation report). The panel found that FINEEC analyses and discusses internally bi-annually the feedback received from the stakeholders. Based on the interviews with the different internal stakeholders, this dialogue is an important element in the continuous development of the agency. It became obvious that staff feels that their voice is heard and that the voices raised through the surveys are meant to have an impact. The higher education representatives also appreciate the constant feedback to and from FINEEC. HEIs offer feedback for the agency through surveys after each audit.

Not only in the context of quality assurance the panel recognizes a strong appreciation of dialogue and consensus orientation in the structures of FINEEC. Meetings and discussions are important factors

in achieving outcomes, assuring quality, and finding solutions. In this process openness of communication does not seem to contradict consensus building; on the contrary, the majority of interviewees appreciated the openness of dialogue with FINEEC as a strong factor in assuring the quality and involvement of different perspectives. Consensus orientation appears to be one element of creating strong and accepted procedures that – based on that consensus – then find consistency in application as they result from a joint understanding of purpose and implementation.

In light of the aforementioned dialogue orientation, the panel also positively recognizes that training and support for staff, but also reviewers are perceived as important elements also of quality assurance. This importance was reiterated by external and internal stakeholders and supports the agency's emphasis on professional development of the staff.

The panel finds that the organisational culture is improvement-oriented and supports innovation and testing of new ideas and methods under participation of stakeholders. Co-development takes place as part of the everyday activities, in ad hoc meetings and workshops in which processes and methods are shared, discussed, and collaboratively developed.

Altogether it can be concluded that FINEEC management and staff have a strong commitment to all its quality assurance processes that have the required extent of formalization while strongly encouraging and relying on dialogue which support quality culture within the organization.

Panel commendations

The panel commends the effort FINEEC puts in the professional development for the staff, which has laudable experience.

FINEEC has a solid and well-functioning approach to internal quality assurance and offers all the relevant documents which are designed taking into consideration the experience and the vision of a diverse group of stakeholders.

Panel conclusion: fully compliant

ESG 3.7 CYCLICAL EXTERNAL REVIEW OF AGENCIES

Standard:

Agencies should undergo an external review at least once every five years in order to demonstrate their compliance with the ESG.

Evidence

FINEEC has taken part in external reviews cyclically and intends to do so in the future. The previous ENQA review in 2016–2017 was postponed for a year due to the merger of Finnish evaluation bodies. The current review is conducted within the five-year framework.

Regarding the engineering programme accreditations, FINEEC takes part in additional external reviews conducted by ENAEE. The last ENAEE review was completed in 2020.

During the interviews with the management as well as with evaluation staff the panel learned that the external perspective coming to FINEEC through these external reviews bring an appreciated fresh perspective and offer reflection that is different from the inside perspective.

Analysis

The panel confirms the cyclical nature of the external review of FINEEC which is clearly obvious through the presented facts and years of reviews. Additionally, the panel underlines the impression that FINEEC seriously considered the findings of the last review particularly when it comes to external stakeholder communication and dialogue. Consequently, FINEEC is applauded for making good use of the outcomes of the cyclical external reviews for the further development of their activities.

Panel conclusion: fully compliant

ESG PART 2: EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

ESG 2.1 CONSIDERATION OF INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

Standard:

External quality assurance should address the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes described in Part I of the ESG.

2016 review recommendation

The panel recommends that FINEEC actively supports initiatives that would lead to Finland's adoption of a national qualifications framework as soon as possible as expected in the Bologna Process. The panel also recommends FINEEC to take into account the new ESG when developing the new audit model for the third round, so that a clear link between the audit targets and the ESG part I is established.

Evidence

With reference to the 2016 review recommendation the SAR explains that Finland has been rather late in (meanwhile) adopting a national qualifications framework. Already in 2006 the Rectors' Conference of Universities of Applied Sciences (Arene) defined a framework of common generic competences for graduates and degree specific competence for UASs that is based on the European Qualifications Framework (Arene 2010). This framework is still used by the UAS today. In 2017 Finland adopted the Finnish National Framework for Qualifications (FiNQF). This was referenced to the European Qualifications Framework and certified as compatible with the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area in 2018.

The institutional audits comprise four areas, which are further elaborated on and their criteria described in the Audit manual. The four areas and their sub-areas are as follows:

I HEI creates competence

- The planning of education
- The implementation of education
- The evaluation and enhancement of education
- Examples of successful enhancement activities

II HEI promotes impact and renewal

- Managing societal engagement and impact
- Research, development and innovation activities and artistic activities with impact
- Promoting renewal through the organisational culture

- Examples of successful enhancement activities

III HEI enhances quality and well-being

- Using the quality system in strategic management
- Supporting the competence development and well-being of the staff
- Functionality and development of the quality system
- Examples of successful enhancement activities

IV HEI as a learning organisation

- An evaluation area selected by the HEI

The alignment of Part I of the ESG with the standards used in FINEEC procedures is demonstrated in the table below, which combines separate tables presented in the SAR. For institutional audits the descriptions provided below are based on the assessment criteria for the level “good” (on a scale of “excellent”, “good”, and “insufficient”), that is required for passing the audit, except for I.8 and I.10.

ESG I.1 Policy for quality assurance	
Institutions should have a policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of their strategic management. Internal stakeholders should develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders.	
How FINEEC institutional audits address this Standard	How FINEEC EUR-ACE accreditation address this Standard
<p>Quality policy</p> <p>The principles, objectives and responsibilities of the quality system constitute the HEI's quality policy, which is public. The quality policy forms a common basis for the quality work.</p> <p>Quality system's link with strategic management</p> <p>The information generated by the quality system is used in the management of the HEI. The system supports the profile of the HEI, the achievement of its objectives related to the core duties and the implementation of its strategy.</p> <p>Development of the quality system</p> <p>The HEI has a functioning quality system which covers its core duties. The quality system helps the HEI to recognise development needs and to enhance its activities in a goal- oriented manner. There is evidence of the functionality and impact of the quality system on the enhancement of the core duties. The system is developed in a systematic manner. The quality culture of the HEI is participatory and open.</p> <p>Participation in enhancement activities</p> <p>Staff, students and external stakeholders participate in the enhancement of the HEI's activities in a purposeful manner.</p>	<p>15) The quality management procedures of the programme are consistent with the quality policy of the higher education institution.</p> <p>16) The organisation and decision-making processes of the programme are fit for effective management.</p> <p>17) In the education programme, the programme aims, curriculum, teaching and learning process, resources and partnerships and quality management are reviewed and developed in a systematic and regular manner, taking into account analysis of results of student admissions, students' study progress, achieved learning levels, feedback from students, graduates and employers, and graduate's employment data.</p> <p>18) In the programme, up-to-date public information is provided about its objectives, teaching and learning process, resources, quality management procedures and results.</p>
ESG I.2 Design and approval of programmes	

<p>Institutions should have processes for the design and approval of their programmes. The programmes should be designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes. The qualification resulting from a programme should be clearly specified and communicated and refer to the correct level of the national qualifications framework for higher education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.</p>	
How FINEEC institutional audits address this Standard	How FINEEC EUR-ACE accreditation address this Standard
<p>Quality management of degree education and other provision</p> <p>The degree programmes and other provision are planned with clearly defined learning outcomes. The planning process ensures that the educational provision is in line with the HEI's strategy and relevant for working life. Aspects concerning internationalisation and continuous learning needs are ensured in the planning process. In terms of degrees, it is ensured that they correspond with the National Framework for Qualifications and Other Competence Modules.</p> <p>Research, development, innovation, and artistic activities are integrated in the education in a way that links research-based information to the education in a relevant way.</p> <p>The students' workload is defined according to the principles of the ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System). The HEI has systematic procedures for approving the plans for degree programmes or other study entities.</p> <p>Involvement of staff, students, and external stakeholders in quality work</p> <p>The HEI systematically collects and uses feedback data on the needs of students, the implementation of the education and the progress of studies to enhance the education. Feedback-on-feedback, i.e., information on changes introduced based on student feedback is provided to students in an appropriate manner.</p> <p>Feedback and evaluation data are used systematically in the enhancement of education. The needs of staff and students are considered in the development of support services.</p>	<p>1) The programme aims, which describe the educational task and purpose of the programme, are consistent with the mission of the higher education institution and reflect the identified needs of employers and other stakeholders.</p> <p>2) The programme learning outcomes, which describe the knowledge, understanding, skills and abilities that the programme enables graduates to demonstrate, are consistent with the programme aims, and these are linked to relevant national qualification frameworks (if applicable) and with the FINEEC reference programme learning outcomes (defined in the accreditation manual).</p> <p>3) The course-level learning outcomes, including thesis work and possible practical training, aggregate to the programme's learning outcomes.</p> <p>8) The teaching and learning process, including the assessment of students, enables students to demonstrate that they have achieved the intended course and programme-level learning outcomes. Students have an active role in co-creating the learning process, and the assessment of students reflects this approach.</p>
<p>1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment</p> <p>Institutions should ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach.</p>	
How FINEEC institutional audits address this Standard	How FINEEC EUR-ACE accreditation address this Standard

<p>Student-centred approach</p> <p>The education is implemented in a manner that supports target-oriented learning and the active role of students in their own learning process. Students receive feedback on their learning which helps them achieve the learning outcomes. The procedures connected with the implementation of education support the efficient progress and completion of studies as well as the integration of students with professional life.</p> <p>The education is planned so that the teaching methods, assessment of learning, and learning environments support the achievement of the learning outcomes. Students and external stakeholders participate in the planning of education in a purposeful manner.</p> <p>The well-being and equality of students are promoted throughout the student's study path. The HEI provides adequate resources, counselling and other services to support the progress of studies and learning.</p>	<p>8) The teaching and learning process, including the assessment of students, enables students to demonstrate that they have achieved the intended course and programme-level learning outcomes. Students have an active role in co-creating the learning process, and the assessment of students reflects this approach.</p>
<p>I.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification</p> <p>Institutions should consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student "life cycle", e.g. student admission, progression, recognition and certification.</p>	
<p>How FINEEC institutional audits address this Standard</p>	<p>How FINEEC EUR-ACE accreditation address this Standard</p>
<p>Regulations</p> <p>The HEI applies the provisions and regulations concerning student admission, the recognition of prior learning, progress of studies and completion of degrees consistently and transparently.</p>	<p>6) The criteria and process for student admission and transfer are clearly specified and published. Students should be informed of the qualifications necessary to enter the programme.</p> <p>7) Students are informed of regulations and guidelines that concern recognition of prior learning, the progress of studies and graduation.</p>
<p>I.5 Teaching staff</p> <p>Institutions should assure themselves of the competence of their teachers. They should apply fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of the staff.</p>	
<p>How FINEEC institutional audits address this Standard</p>	<p>How FINEEC EUR-ACE accreditation address this Standard</p>
<p>Staff competence development and well-being and transparent recruitment procedures</p> <p>The HEI has functioning procedures to identify development needs concerning staff competence and to support the development of staff competence.</p> <p>The HEI has transparent procedures for staff recruitment.</p> <p>The HEI has systematic procedures to support the well-being, equality and non-discrimination of staff.</p>	<p>9) The academic staff are sufficient in number and qualification to enable students to achieve the learning outcomes of the programme. There are arrangements in place to keep the pedagogical and professional competence of the academic staff up to date.</p> <p>10) An effective team of technical and administrative staff supports the programme. There are arrangements in place to keep the competence of the support staff up to date.</p>
<p>I.6 Learning resources and student support</p> <p>Institutions should have appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities and ensure that adequate and readily accessible learning resources and student support are provided.</p>	
<p>How FINEEC institutional audits address this Standard</p>	<p>How FINEEC EUR-ACE accreditation address this Standard</p>

<p>Support, counselling and guidance services</p> <p>The HEI provides adequate resources, counselling and other services to support the progress of studies and learning.</p> <p>The needs of staff and students are considered in the development of support services.</p>	<p>11) The students are provided with adequate and accessible support services to enable the achievement of the programme's learning outcomes.</p> <p>12) The classrooms, computing facilities, software, laboratories, workshops, libraries and associated equipment and services are sufficient and accessible to enable students to achieve the programme's learning outcomes.</p> <p>13) The HEI and the programme have external partnerships that are adequate for achieving the programme's learning outcomes.</p> <p>14) The financial resources are sufficient to implement the learning process as planned and to further develop it.</p>
<p>ESG 1.7 Information management</p> <p>Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes and other activities.</p>	
<p>How FINEEC institutional audits address this Standard</p>	<p>How FINEEC EUR-ACE accreditation address this Standard</p>
<p>Monitoring and information use for development and enhancement</p> <p>The HEI monitors and evaluates the degree programmes and other provision to ensure that they are up to date with regard to the latest research findings as well as the changing needs of the society and working life.</p> <p>In the degree programmes and other provision, how well the intended learning outcomes are achieved is analysed.</p> <p>Information produced by the HEI's analysis of its operational environment is used to set the direction for its activities.</p> <p>The information generated by the quality system is used in the management of the HEI. The system supports the profile of the HEI, the achievement of its objectives related to the core duties and the implementation of its strategy</p>	<p>17) The programme reviews and develops the programme aims, curriculum, teaching and learning process, resources and partnerships and quality management in a systematic and regular manner, taking into account analysis of results of student admissions, students' study progress, achieved learning levels, as well as student, graduate and employer feedback and graduate employment data.</p>
<p>ESG 1.8 Public information</p> <p>Institutions should publish information about their activities, including programmes, which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to date and readily accessible.</p>	
<p>How FINEEC institutional audits address this Standard</p>	<p>How FINEEC EUR-ACE accreditation address this Standard</p>

<p>The audit team visits the audited HEI's website and intranet site as part of the assessment process.</p> <p>In general, the Finnish HEIs have well-developed websites with all key information on their activities and programmes. All degree programmes offered by the Finnish HEIs are also published on Studyinfo.fi where the applications to programmes are also made.</p> <p>Finland has also a well-developed and open system for statistics collected by Statistics Finland, the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Finnish National Agency for Education. The HEIs deliver their data once a year.</p> <p>Vipunen.fi reporting portal include HEI data, e.g. on applicants, enrolled students and graduates, placement after graduation, research publications, international activity, feedback and career monitoring.</p>	<p>18) The programme provides up-to-date public information about its objectives, teaching and learning process, resources, quality management procedures and results.</p>
<p>1.9 On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes</p> <p>Institutions should monitor and periodically review their programmes to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and respond to the needs of students and society. These reviews should lead to continuous improvement of the programme. Any action planned or taken as a result should be communicated to all those concerned.</p>	
<p>How FINEEC institutional audits address this Standard</p>	<p>How FINEEC EUR-ACE accreditation address this Standard</p>
<p>Monitoring and evaluation of degree programmes and other provision</p> <p>The HEI monitors and evaluates the degree programmes and other provision to ensure that they are up to date regarding the latest research findings as well as the changing needs of the society and working life. Opportunities for continuous learning are ensured in the educational provision. In the degree programmes and other provision, how well the intended learning outcomes are achieved is analysed.</p>	<p>1) The programme aims, which describe the educational task and purpose of the programme, are consistent with the mission of the higher education institution and reflect the identified needs of employers and other stakeholders.</p> <p>17) The programme reviews and develops the programme aims, curriculum, teaching and learning process, resources and partnerships and quality management in a systematic and regular manner, taking into account analysis of results of student admissions, students' study progress, achieved learning levels, as well as student, graduate and employer feedback and graduate employment data.</p>
<p>1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance</p> <p>Institutions should undergo external quality assurance in line with the ESG on a cyclical basis.</p>	
<p>How FINEEC institutional audits address this Standard</p>	<p>How FINEEC EUR-ACE accreditation address this Standard</p>
<p>Finnish HEIs are required to regularly participate in external evaluation of their activities and quality systems. HEIs decide how they meet their statutory obligation. FINEEC conducts institutional audits in line with the ESG on a cyclical basis. The quality label is valid for six years and, thus, the FINEEC procedure requires an audit of the HEI to take place every six years.</p>	<p>The engineering programme accreditation is a voluntary external quality assurance method for the institutions. The accreditation is valid for six years.</p>

Analysis

The panel not only used the provided documents to assess the way in which part I of the ESG is transferred into FINEEC evaluations, but also carefully discussed the practical relevance of specific aspects of these standards with the reviewers and evaluation staff to better understand the assessment in practice.

Generally, the panel found a great alignment of the standards FINEEC uses in its audits and EUR-ACE accreditations. For institutional audits the chosen approach underlines the responsibility of the institution to arrange processes that assure all relevant areas of part I of the ESG are covered. The panel also found reflection of the topics in the published reports for both institutional audits as well as EUR-ACE accreditation with the comprehensible different intensity based on an institutional- or programme centred approach.

The assessment is done by independent peer groups and the panel learned with great interest that some experts found FINEEC's adjusted practice due to COVID-19 virtual visits even beneficial for the thorough review of evidence. What beforehand were evidence rooms is now replaced by virtual access to evidence which is accessible for a longer time as well as better structured to specifically access evidence for a line of inquiry of the panel.

The panel found the aspect of student-centred learning to be an area that seems strongly represented not only in the standards and areas of evaluation of FINEEC for both activities, but also generally as a point of awareness in the higher education system in Finland as it was referred to in numerous interviews to be of high importance.

At the same time the panel learned from interviews with reviewers that some perceived a weak representation of ESG 1.9 in institutional audits. The panel very carefully followed up on that issue by both reviewing documents and reports, but also by discussing the issue with FINEEC staff to find that this point was already subject to first internal discussions in the agency. Referring to the reflection of ESG 1.9 in published audit reports the panel concludes that the topic generally is covered, but when compared to other standards this reflection is relatively implicit in expressing an expectation. At the same time the panel considers that the FINEEC methodology is strongly enhancement oriented, and it could also very well be that in this area the room for development at a Finnish higher education institution is relatively larger than in other areas. Consequently, the panel is satisfied with the reflection and assessment of ESG 1.9 as part of FINEEC procedures while it might be an area for future development as it seems that stakeholder perception and expectation is ready for a more expressive positioning of FINEEC in this regard.

The panel also specifically assessed the reflection of ESG in FINEEC procedures abroad and can positively confirm that – besides a very limited number of cases - the same standards are used and reports follow the same structure as for evaluations in Finland. Consequently, the ESG are well covered also in these procedures.

Panel suggestions for further improvement

FINEEC is encouraged to consider weighing ESG 1.9 more explicitly in its methodology and thus also raising the level of expectations of Finnish higher education institutions regarding monitoring and review of study programmes.

Panel conclusion: fully compliant

ESG 2.2 DESIGNING METHODOLOGIES FIT FOR PURPOSE

Standard:

External quality assurance should be defined and designed specifically to ensure its fitness to achieve the aims and objectives set for it, while taking into account relevant regulations. Stakeholders should be involved in its design and continuous improvement.

2016 review recommendation

The panel recommends FINEEC to supplement its comprehensive efforts in engaging the broad higher education community in the development of the next audit model with more direct consultations with the main stakeholders at the national level, e.g. the rectors' conferences, the social partners and the Ministry, in order to ensure support and consensus about the model.

Evidence

The FINEEC SAR provides a detailed description on the steps taken by the agency to address the recommendation made in the 2016 ENQA review, on stakeholder dialogue in the further development of the methodology and its specifics are mentioned in the following paragraphs.

Quality Audits

FINEEC describes its audit methodology in the FINEEC Audit manual for higher education institutions 2019-2021 which contains all relevant information on the methodology and its implementation. The audit manual has been supplemented with a document outlining the procedures for the online implementation of audits.

The SAR explains and the interview with institutions and other stakeholders confirmed that the external stakeholders, as well as higher education institutions and students, were extensively consulted during the planning of the new audit framework in 2016 by organising a series of consultation meetings, seminars, workshops and other events during the planning phase of the audit framework for the third round of audits. This exchange was followed later with presentations and discussions of the framework for example in the context of the FINEECs annual seminars widely participated by different stakeholders.

The SAR similarly evidences (e.g. p 67-68, 110-111) how FINEEC has collected feedback on audits on the second round, as well as pilot audits on the third round and used it to enhance the fitness for purpose of its methodology. Regular feedback from audit teams and audited higher education institutions is also collected and used to develop the procedures. FINEEC has also introduced a separate set of guidelines on conducting the audits online during the COVID-19 pandemic which were mentioned to be very helpful for institutions and reviewers.

A new feature introduced in the third round of audits includes a benchlearning exercise undertaken by the higher education institution prior to the audit; as well as a Quality label of Excellence which can be granted to those institutions who receive the highest mark in at least one of the evaluation areas (see evidence section under ESG 2.3). The practices and criteria for these are described in the Audit manual and are also explained above in the explanation Quality Assurance activities implemented by FINEEC.

Engineering programme accreditations

The engineering programme accreditation method of FINEEC follows the EUR-ACE framework coordinated by ENAEE. In addition, the current ESGs have been considered in the design of the methodology. The preparation of the methodology in 2014 included two pilot accreditations, observed by an external evaluation panel assigned by ENAEE. The design phase was conducted by a planning team that consisted of representatives of higher education institutions, students, engineering associations and working life. In addition, FINEEC organised two open seminars in 2011 and 2012 for HEIs that provide engineering education. Stakeholders are involved in the continuous improvement of the model via two channels. Firstly, the FINEEC Committee for Engineering Education consists of representatives of higher education institutions, students, engineering associations and working life. Secondly, FINEEC collects feedback from all HEIs that participate in the accreditations and from

experts on the accreditation teams. As a result of continuous improvement, the accreditation standards were updated in autumn 2015.

FINEEC was authorised by ENAEE to award the EUR-ACE labels for the second time in summer 2020. ENAEE is in the process of reviewing its standards and guidelines in 2021. Subsequently, FINEEC shall update its EUR-ACE manual to comply with the revisions. Updating needs have also been discussed in the FINEEC Committee for Engineering Education for the in 2020 outlining a number of issues that shall be implemented with the next update, e.g. adjustments to timelines and limitations to the number of appendices.

Analysis

The agency uses a comprehensive mix of different methods to conduct institutional audits and accreditations, which the panel discussed with the agency management and staff, as well as the higher education institutions. In years 2017-2021, the agency has conducted altogether 26 audits and five programme accreditations of engineering programmes making audits a much more prevalent procedure. Additionally, the agency has conducted thematic evaluations, which have been described above, and do not fall under the scope of the ESGs.

All these groups confirmed the appropriateness of the methodologies used, and were especially complementary of the benchlearning exercise included as a new feature on the institutional audits on the third round of audits. Higher education institutions are free to choose their benchlearning partner among national or international institutions, and the partner may be a university, university of applied sciences, a governmental agency, or any other type of cooperation organization. The panel learned, for example, that one HEI had chosen the national land survey agency as a partner. There are no expected outcomes for the benchlearning exercise. However, the higher education institutions told the panel that in some cases the benchlearning has resulted in changes made to the institutional strategy, or agreement of the parties to continue the benchlearning process even after the audit. The panel believes that the inclusion of the benchlearning process is a valuable addition to the audit. Its very open design reflects the understanding of the role of FINEEC in supporting enhancement and keeping the responsibility with the institution. Also, it shows that FINEEC is aware that institutions and stakeholders rightfully demand an added value for the third cycle as sheer repetition of the first and second cycle might have been less effective to support enhancement.

For both kinds of activities some of the practices were adapted to online mode during the COVID-19 pandemic. The adjustments are very well explained in respective guidelines. The panel positively recognizes that agency staff, higher education institutions and evaluation teams expressed their satisfaction with the way the audits and accreditations were able to progress during the COVID-19 pandemic measures.

Altogether the panel finds that the methodology implemented by FINEEC meets the defined purposes very well as they follow clearly defined goals. The panel found strong consensus between the perspectives of the different stakeholder groups regarding the aim of FINEEC's activities: to support enhancement. This is clearly achieved and facilitated by an intense dialogue with the partners. Consequently, the activities also respect the workload required to undergo an external review by FINEEC and at the same time allow institutions to demonstrate their improvements.

Panel commendations

The review panel commends the introduction of benchlearning as part of the audit process. Benchlearning has the capacity to enhance the quality of the institution's chosen focus area and to bring additional value to the participating institutions.

Panel conclusion: fully compliant

ESG 2.3 IMPLEMENTING PROCESSES

Standard:

External quality assurance processes should be reliable, useful, pre-defined, implemented consistently and published. They include:

- a self-assessment or equivalent
- an external assessment normally including a site visit
- a report resulting from the external assessment
- a consistent follow-up

Evidence

The processes for both activities under review differ from each other and therefore are described separately to provide evidence.

Quality audits

The implementation process is described in the agency's SAR (p 70-73). As well as the standards listed under ESG 2.1, the audit process and audit team requirements are described in the FINEEC Audit manual for higher education institutions 2019-2021. As explained above, the audit manual has been supplemented with a document outlining the procedures for the online implementation of audits, as well as with a separate document that comprises the criteria for the quality label of excellence.

The Audit process – including the four steps of SAR, site-visit, external expert report, and follow-up - is visualised under FINEEC's procedures earlier in this report with an explanation of the newly added practice of benchlearning.

The review team members and the FINEEC project manager prepare for the site visit by drafting the site visit programme and a question list and preparing workshops. During the visit, the team interviews or organises workshops with representatives of the institution's management, teaching and other staff groups, students and external stakeholders. The aim is to involve as widely as possible different groups of students and staff. The topics for the hearings are guided by the criteria.

The SAR explains that the audits include the opportunity to be awarded the Quality Label for Excellence. In order to qualify for the Quality Label for Excellence, the HEI must provide evidence of exceptionally high-quality enhancement activities in connection with the evaluation area in question and the criteria of excellence. The process and criteria for the Quality Label of Excellence are published on the FINEEC website. The first Quality Label of Excellence was awarded in May 2021.

The panel learned that, in light of the enhancement orientation of the methodology, the HEI organises a final seminar together with FINEEC, usually within one month of the Evaluation Committee's decision. The seminar gives the institution's staff and students the opportunity to openly discuss the audit results and conclusions with representatives of FINEEC and the audit team. If the HEI is required to undergo a re-audit, the areas that are in essential need of development and which will be subject to the re-audit are recorded in the Evaluation Committee's decision. The re-audit is conducted two to three years after the decision on the initial audit. The re-audit process description is also publicly available on the FINEEC website.

Engineering programme accreditation

The steps taken in the engineering programme accreditations are described in the agency's SAR (p 73-75). Similarly, FINEEC has published a document titled Standards and procedures for engineering

programme accreditation which outlines the procedures. Comparable to the adjusted procedures for quality audits there is also an addendum that establishes the principles of online implementation for accreditations.

The steps taken in an accreditation are described in the manual (p.15) as follows:

1. The HEI makes a request for an accreditation of a particular engineering degree programme
2. Agreement between FINEEC and the HEI
3. FINEEC appoints and trains the accreditation team
4. The HEI compiles the self-evaluation report
5. The accreditation team visits the HEI
6. The accreditation team prepares the report and the HEI checks the report for factual correctness
7. The accreditation team gives its recommendation on the result of the accreditation
8. The FINEEC Committee for Engineering Education's decides on the result
9. FINEEC publishes the accreditation result and the report
10. The accreditation team and the HEI give feedback to FINEEC

If the degree programme is accredited with conditions, the programme must fulfil the set conditions within the timeframe specified in the decision. Within the specified period, the HEI must submit an interim report to the FINEEC Committee for Engineering Education on how the programme has fulfilled the requirements. The Committee may decide that a site visit is needed to confirm the extent to which the requirements have been fulfilled. The Committee may also consult the accreditation team on the matter. The Committee decides on the continuation of the accreditation based on the HEI's report and possible site visit and possible consultation with the review team. If the programme fails to meet the conditions on time, the validity of the accreditation will lapse.

Analysis

In addition to studying the documentation (SAR, audit and accreditation manuals and their supplements), the review panel discussed the implementation of the audits and accreditations with the agency, higher education institutions and external reviewers, who all presented a similar understanding of the implementation processes. The review panel furthermore probed the consistency of the international audits, of which the agency has so far only conducted two (University of Graz in the second and third cycle of reviews); with the audit of the University of Ljubljana on the way. The team was told that the audit process remains the same despite the audit being conducted internationally. The panel also checked the latest international audit report by the University of Graz. The panel was told that the only differences between the audits conducted in Finland and abroad are related to taking into account the national context. For example, in Finland the audit is valid for six years, whereas for the University of Graz the audit is valid for seven years, as per the Austrian practice. Similarly, while in Finland the audits are published in an HTML format on the audit platform, including the institution's self-evaluation report, the report for the University of Graz is published on the FINEEC website in PDF format and excluding the self-evaluation report. The panel believes that these adaptations are appropriate and a result of dialogue with the relevant and affected stakeholders.

In Finland, audits can be conducted in Finnish, Swedish, or English. In each case, the summaries of the audit reports are published in all three languages, making it easier for both national and international audiences to ascertain the consistency of the audit process and reports.

The audits include a follow-up process, which is based on seminars. While there is an immediate seminar some months past the decision, the panel also learned from the SAR and interviews that FINEEC arranges regular enhancement seminars for HEIs approximately three years after their audit.

One of the purposes of the seminar is to provide feedback on the work carried out at the HEIs to enhance their activities after the audit, and to offer the entire higher education sector an opportunity to share experiences and good practices regarding quality work. The HEIs that have received the Quality Label for Excellence are invited to the seminar to share their excellent practices. The panel found institutions to be very satisfied with this practice and considers this seminar-based form of follow up a very sound interpretation of follow up in line with the defined aims of FINEEC's activities. Also, it enables dialogue based on implemented enhancement and this supports the further development of the Finnish higher education system.

The panel also discussed the implementation of the EUR-ACE accreditations with various FINEEC representatives, higher education institutions and external reviewers. One of the international team members, who had participated in an EUR-ACE engineering programme accreditation organised by FINEEC, had prior experience also of a EUR-ACE accreditation organised by another agency. The international panel member was very complimentary of the way the accreditation was organised by FINEEC. The FINEEC staff also described how the necessity of moving to online site visits had changed the practice of using physical evidence rooms to using an electronic evidence rooms, and how that practice had proved to be so useful that the agency has decided to use that also in the future.

Guidelines for both institutional audits and EUR-ACE programme accreditations have been created for the eventuality of needing to conduct them online. The guidelines state that the principles and criteria remain the same regardless of face-to-face or online implementation and that any part of the audit or accreditation process can take place online. All the parties that the review panel spoke to expressed their overall satisfaction on how the online procedures had proceeded.

Panel commendations

The review panel finds the practice of organising the follow-up in the form of an enhancement-focused seminar commendable, as it enables the higher education institutions to share good practices and learn from each other.

Panel conclusion: fully compliant

ESG 2.4 PEER-REVIEW EXPERTS

Standard:

External quality assurance should be carried out by groups of external experts that include (a) student member(s).

Evidence

According to information provided in the SAR external evaluations are conducted by External Expert Committees which consist of national academic and international experts, employers, and students. The SAR describes these committees as consisting of 4 members, including 2-3 members from the higher education sector, one student and one representative from the working life outside of HEIs. An international audit team always includes Finnish experts, and usually has 2-3 international members. The panel learned during the interviews with institutions and reviewers that this composition is also implemented in practice. For EUR-ACE accreditations reviewers with a background in engineering are involved.

The panels are recruited through a nomination process, where all Finnish HEIs are invited to nominate experts in an open call. Cooperation with national or international student unions (SYL, SAMOK, ESU) and other EQA agencies aims to nominate reviewers with specified profiles. FINEEC also uses its

national and international network and internal experience to gather additional nominations. The nomination of the student reviewers is made by the students' unions.

FINEEC proposes a team of evaluators taking into consideration the criteria published in the audit manual and the profile of the HEI under review. The main criteria for academic and QA experts include a good knowledge of quality and HE systems and previous audit experience. The panel learned during the interviews with reviewers that equal involvement and collaboration of each member of the team is perceived to be an important aspect in practice ensuring the equal status of each reviewer in the panel.

The training of the panel members is part of FINEEC's quality assurance activities. All reviewers, including students, are trained together. During the interviews the reviewers confirmed that they received training and that they are satisfied with all the support offered by FINEEC. The aspect of preparation was particularly highlighted by reviewers to be effective and efficient at the same time. At the same time students mentioned the need for more in-depth training not only to familiarize themselves at the beginning with the basic procedures, but also to offer them a more detailed view of the QA system.

Analysis

Based on the guidelines for selection of external experts and the information gathered in interviews during the site visit, the panel concludes that the composition of the review panels is appropriate regarding size and qualification and that it also includes students.

FINEEC actively involves stakeholders in the nomination of experts and assures their independence not only formally by no-conflict of interest declarations but also through training explaining their roles and the review's expectations. When appointing reviewers, their prior experience and the profile of the university/programme under review are also considered. During the interviews with experts and representatives of institutions the panel did not identify any issues regarding the independence of experts.

The panel was impressed with the level of appreciation expressed by reviewers for the preparation offered by FINEEC through training sessions and different useful materials, considered conducive to a professional conduct of the assessments. The thorough preparation of reviewers was also mentioned by institutions.

An aspect that gained the attention of the panel were different perceptions about specific training for student reviewers. The review panel learned during the site visit that FINEEC has no pool of student reviewers. The existence of one would facilitate the establishment of a strong and experienced student reviewer network and promote their involvement in QA processes further. Acknowledging the overall excellent reviewer preparation, the panel recognizes that entry knowledge and experience for reviewers differ (as per potential experience) and consequently providing students with some additional preparation before entering the training might help level out the starting level knowledge. This could be in the form of regularly targeted resources providing information or even some introductory videos/clips explaining specifics of the system. These resources would not have to be limited to students and could be made available on demand.

The panel also recognized the careful preparation of reviewers when operating across borders for the few cases that FINEEC so far has processed. All panels included experts with experience in or knowledge of the local system.

Panel suggestions for further improvement

FINEEC is encouraged to consider advance preparation of student and external stakeholder reviewers by providing e.g. short videos on certain specific aspects (the system, the role of reviewers, etc) before the review case specific training. These could be available for all categories of experts.

Panel conclusion: fully compliant

ESG 2.5 CRITERIA FOR OUTCOMES

Standard:

Any outcomes or judgements made as the result of external quality assurance should be based on explicit and published criteria that are applied consistently, irrespective of whether the process leads to a formal decision.

Evidence

Quality audits

Following the SAR, the assessment and decisions are based on clear criteria published in the audit manual. The manual explains that the evaluation areas I–III are each assessed as one entity using the scale excellent, good, insufficient.

In order for the HEI to pass the audit, the evaluation areas I–III should reach at least the level “good”. The level of good for evaluation areas I–III is described extensively using qualitative descriptions in Chapter 3 of the audit manual. There it is also described that the level of excellent means that the HEI shows evidence of long-term and effective enhancement work while the HEI’s enhancement activities also create substantial added value for the HEI, stakeholders, or both. The HEI is expected to present compelling examples of successful enhancement activities.

The level of insufficient means that the HEI shows an absence of, or major shortcomings in systematic, functioning and participatory procedures in the evaluation area (I–III). There is no clear evidence of the impact of quality management in the enhancement of activities.

The FINEEC project manager supports the audit team’s activities by taking part in the team’s discussions as an expert in FINEEC audits and by instructing the team on matters concerning the audit criteria. Consistent application of the criteria is also supported by auditor training provided to all audit teams.

The panel addressed the issue of consistency with the leadership of institutions but also quality managers to better understand their perception of differentiation and comparability. During these interviews the panel learned that there is good awareness and the criteria to succeed are well known by institutions. Also reviewers found that decisions generally reflect well the details of the report and discussions with the panel and at the same time are consistent in the decision also when comparing between different audits.

Engineering programme accreditation

The SAR explains that the accreditation team assesses the extent to which the programme fulfils the individual accreditation standards that are defined in Chapter 2 of the accreditation manual, using a three-point scale:

- Acceptable – the programme fully meets the standard, even if improvements are still possible;

- Conditionally acceptable – the standard is not fully met but the programme can amend it within three years;
- Unacceptable – the programme does not meet the standard and cannot amend it within three years

Based on the assessment of the individual standards, the accreditation team recommends to the FINEEC Committee for Engineering Education that the programme should be either:

- Accredited without reservation, if all individual standards are acceptable;
- Accredited with conditions, if any of the standards are conditionally acceptable and none are unacceptable;
- Not accredited, if any of the standards are unacceptable.

The template of the report is publicly available on the FINEEC website. The FINEEC Committee for Engineering Education decides on the accreditation result based on the report and the recommendation of the accreditation team. The accreditation decision defines the exact period of validity of the accreditation and, in the case of a conditional accreditation, the timeframe in which to fulfil the conditions.

Analysis

The panel found firm alignment between the practice presented in the SAR and the oral statements during the site visit. The criteria for outcomes are clear and published. The information available for institutions is the same as for reviewers, as templates are publicly available.

The panel also reviewed one case in which an institution did not pass the review and had to be re-evaluated. The case showed that the different outcome options are practiced and based on the published criteria also consequently applied. Also, a review of several published reports including the decision indicated an evidence-based approach to decision making that is also applied consistently. This perception of the panel was supported through oral evidence during interviews with quality managers of institutions.

The available outcome options underline the enhancement orientation of FINEEC work in both activities. Even if standards are assessed to be met, panels have the option to indicate room for further improvement to support institutions.

Panel conclusion: fully compliant

ESG 2.6 REPORTING

Standard:

Full reports by the experts should be published, clear and accessible to the academic community, external partners and other interested individuals. If the agency takes any formal decision based on the reports, the decision should be published together with the report.

Evidence

The FINEEC website includes a register of all audited higher education institutions and all accredited engineering programmes, both current and expired ones. FINEEC provides report templates indicating

the required structure of the reports and facilitating comparability as well as comprehensiveness of the reports.

Quality audits

According to the FINEEC SAR (p. 82) the agency publishes all audit reports on a specific audit platform, where the reports are accessible in HTML format. On the platform, the report includes the institution's self-evaluation report, external evaluation group's report as well as the HE evaluation committee's decision. The SAR furthermore highlights that in the case that an institution is required to undergo a re-audit, the areas requiring improvement are highlighted in the report. The audit reports can be published in one of the national languages Finnish and Swedish, or in English. In each case, the audit report includes a summary in all three languages. The SAR also notes that press releases of a completed audit are similarly published in three languages.

Furthermore, the audit reports of international institutions are also published on the FINEEC website in PDF format, while the inclusion of the self-evaluation report is optional. The audit reports of international audits are published in English.

Engineering programme accreditations

The SAR explains that the EUR-ACE engineering programme accreditation reports are also published on the FINEEC website and the decision of the FINEEC Committee for Engineering Education decision is recorded in the report. All the accreditation reports by the review panels were published in English, without a summary in other languages. The SAR furthermore states that the same process for communicating evaluation results apply for engineering programme accreditations as well as for audits.

Analysis

In addition to studying the written evidence such as the SAR and a selection of audit and accreditation reports, the review panel discussed the reports with the agency staff and relevant stakeholders. It appears to the review panel that the reports are widely read and considered easily accessible and clear. Some stakeholders commended especially on the visuality of the reports, which makes them more accessible to different kinds of readers.

Also, it became obvious to the panel that generally the reports follow the same structure and are comparable in the level of detail. They enable an external reader to understand the context and explain well the reasons for the recommendations and assessments. The decision is published together with the report, so transparency for the external reader is achieved.

It should be recognized that executive summaries of audit reports are published in Finnish, Swedish and English, which makes it easy for external audiences to check consistency across different languages. International readers can access the Finnish audits through the summary.

Interviews with the reviewers clearly underlined that the ownership of the report lies with the external reviewers and that the report drafting is supported by FINEEC which is helpful in assuring comprehensiveness and clarity with regard to comparability.

Positive recognition should be given to the fact that FINEEC does not end reporting with reports. A beneficial additional element of the audit process which contributes to the wider accessibility of the audit results are the seminars which are organized with the HEI as its audit is completed. Furthermore, the follow-up that is part of the audit process and organized three years after, also takes the form of a seminar in which the institutions can share their best practices and learn from each other. In this regard FINEEC can be complimented for using follow up activities also to increase transparency, enhance accessibility of findings and initiate dialogue on quality aspects in the Finnish higher education community and beyond.

Panel commendations

The review panel commends FINEEC for the practice of publishing all national audit reports, comprising both the institutional self-evaluation report and the external expert group report as well as the audit decision on a separate FINEEC Audit Platform. On the platform the reports are easily accessible and visually informative.

Panel conclusion: fully compliant

ESG 2.7 COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

Standard:

Complaints and appeals processes should be clearly defined as part of the design of external quality assurance processes and communicated to the institutions.

Evidence

For the Quality Audit FINEEC has a *Procedure to request a review of an audit result 2019–2024* published on the website. According to the procedure the request can only be made by the higher education institution whose audit result is at issue.

The request may be raised in cases of the following audit results decided on by the Higher Education Evaluation Committee:

1. The higher education institution does not pass the audit, and a re-audit is required;
or
2. The higher education institution does not pass the re-audit.

The request may be based on the grounds that the audit has not been performed in compliance with the audit manual, and that the audit, as performed, brings into question the fair and equal treatment of higher education institutions.

The request is processed by an expert team appointed by the Evaluation Council that operates under FINEEC for the duration of the Council's term of office. A description of the appeals procedure and the composition of the expert team are available on the FINEEC website. Currently the expert team is set up of a rector of a University of Applied Sciences, a rector (emerita) who is a former member of the HEEC, and a quality manager of the National Defense University. So far, only one request to review the result of a re-audit has been made, in September 2016. The decision by the expert team was not to return the re-audit decision to the Higher Education Evaluation Committee for re-processing.

A HEI unsatisfied with the conduct of the EUR-ACE accreditation process by FINEEC, or with the accreditation result, can make use of FINEEC's appeals procedure for Engineering Programme Accreditations that is available on FINEEC's website. The procedure is the same as in the case of audits.

Analysis

Considering the provided policy as well as the discussions with FINEEC management the panel understands the *Procedure to request a review of an audit result* as a well-defined appeals process.

During the interviews with the stakeholders, the panel learned that they feel they could bring up any complaint in discussions with the agency regarding any aspect of FINEEC's reviews. There was consensus that feedback is well-received at FINEEC. The panel clearly felt a cultural component of dialogue orientation that enables to raise issues and to strive for compromise and consensus.

At the same time the panel also carefully reviewed the one appeal case and – without assessing the specifics of the case – strongly feels that the nature of the issue was more like a complaint than an appeal. However, the lack of any formal complaints process left making an appeal as the only option open to the institution to express its dissatisfaction. Other than a request to review the result - that is, an appeal - FINEEC has no formal complaints procedure available. The panel learned during the site visit that in case of any issue, the stakeholders have the opportunity to offer oral feedback to highlight any problem that might have occurred. As the panel learned in interviews with the institutions, FINEEC management also treats this feedback as an opportunity to improve the quality of FINEEC's activities.

While the panel clearly understands that – in light of an open communication culture - the need for an explicit complaints procedure might not be felt so strongly, the panel believes that complaints procedures are particularly designed for cases where the “usual practice” did not work as foreseen. It is an important element assuring that the voice of institutions can be heard. This gains particular weight as FINEEC also offers (to some extent) its services internationally and the cultural component cannot be necessarily relied upon. Consequently, a clearly defined procedure for complaints should be developed.

In this context FINEEC might also consider discussing to what extent the appeals process has to be limited only to the negative decisions of the Higher Education Evaluation Committee. The panel believes that in a mature system of external quality assurance like Finland, structures are robust enough to provide institutions the right to appeal whenever they see that something did not go according to the guidelines, independently from the outcome.

Panel recommendations

The panel recommends the agency to establish a formal complaints procedure. The procedure should be made known to all concerned parties.

Panel suggestion for further improvement

FINEEC is encouraged to open its appeal process in a way that all decisions can be appealed.

Panel conclusion: substantially compliant

CONCLUSION

SUMMARY OF COMMENDATIONS

ESG 3.1

FINEEC is commended for its engagement with a wide range of stakeholders through its consultation processes and dissemination activities.

FINEEC is commended for its openness and willingness to react to demands of the sector.

ESG 3.5

The review panel commends the way FINEEC conducts collaborative work across different units of FINEEC to make the most of the agency's human resources. This increases the knowledge capital of every individual FINEEC staff member and contributes to a broader understanding of education as a comprehensive system starting from early childhood education and care all the way to higher education.

ESG 3.6

The panel commends the effort FINEEC puts in the professional development for the staff, which has a laudable experience.

FINEEC has a solid and well-functioning approach to internal quality assurance and offers all the relevant documents which are designed taking in consideration the experience and the vision of a diverse group of stakeholders.

ESG 2.2

The review panel commends the introduction of benchlearning as part of the audit process. Benchlearning has the capacity to enhance the quality of the institution's chosen focus area and to bring additional value to the participating institutions.

ESG 2.3

The review panel finds the practice of organising the follow-up in the form of an enhancement-focused seminar commendable, as it enables the higher education institutions to share good practices and learn from each other.

ESG 2.6

The review panel commends FINEEC for the practice of publishing all national audit reports, comprising both the institutional self-evaluation report and the external expert group report as well as the audit decision on a separate FINEEC Audit Platform. On the platform the reports are accessible and visually informative.

OVERVIEW OF JUDGEMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

ESG 3.1 - fully compliant

ESG 3.2 - fully compliant

ESG 3.3 - fully compliant

ESG 3.4 - fully compliant

ESG 3.5 – fully compliant

ESG 3.6 - fully compliant

ESG 3.7 - fully compliant

ESG 2.1 - fully compliant

ESG 2.2 - fully compliant

ESG 2.3 -fully compliant

ESG 2.4 - fully compliant

ESG 2.5 - fully compliant

ESG 2.6 - fully compliant

ESG 2.7 - substantially compliant

The panel recommends the agency to establish a formal complaints procedure. The procedure should be made known to all concerned parties.

In light of the documentary and oral evidence considered by it, the review panel is satisfied that, in the performance of its functions, FINEEC is in compliance with the ESG.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

ESG 3.1

While the core focus of the agency within the scope of the ESG rightly continues to be institutional audit, the agency may build on its successful experience of programme accreditation in the context of EUR-ACE to anticipate further demands for programme accreditation from HEIs. These may arise in the context of particular fields of study, such as medicine, or particular modes of provision, such as international joint programmes.

FINEEC is encouraged to consider including foreign / international stakeholders in their structure to assure some outside ideas feed in the system and enable input from a different perspective.

ESG 2.1

FINEEC is encouraged to consider weighing ESG 1.9 more explicitly in its methodology and thus also raising the level of expectations of Finnish higher education institutions regarding monitoring and review of study programmes.

ESG 2.4

FINEEC is encouraged to consider advance preparation of student and external stakeholder reviewers by providing e.g. short videos on certain specific aspects (the system, the role etc) before the review case specific training. These could be available for all categories of experts.

ESG 2.7

FINEEC is encouraged to open its appeal process in a way that all decisions can be appealed.

ANNEXES

ANNEX I: PROGRAMME OF THE SITE VISIT

31 AUGUST 2021		
14:00	Review panel's kick-off meeting and preparations for day 1	
16:00-17:00	A pre-visit meeting ZOOM with the agency contact person to clarify elements related to the overall system and context	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mirella Nordblad, Counsellor of Evaluation (main responsible for SAR) 2. Helka Kekäläinen, Head of Higher Education and Liberal Adult Education Unit
17:00	Review panels internal meeting to reflect on overall system – need for additional evidence?	

MONDAY 6. SEPT 2021		
TIMING	TOPIC	PERSONS FOR INTERVIEW
10 am	Review panel's private meeting	
10:30 -11:30	Meeting with Management Team of FINEEC and Chair of the Evaluation Council	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Harri Peltoniemi, Director 2. Hannele Seppälä, Deputy Director 3. Helka Kekäläinen, Head of Higher Education and Liberal Adult Education Unit 4. Kirsi Hiltunen, Head of the Vocational Education Unit 5. Elina Harjunen, Head of the General Education and Early Childhood Education Unit 6. Vesa Saarikoski, Chair of the Evaluation Council and Rector of JAMK UAS
11:30-11:45	Review panel's private discussion	
11:45 – 12:45	Meeting with the FINEEC working group responsible for the self-evaluation report	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mirella Nordblad, Counsellor of Evaluation (main responsible for SAR) 2. Kati Isoaho, Senior Evaluation Advisor 3. Helka Kekäläinen, Head of Higher Education and Liberal Adult Education Unit
12:45 – 13:45	Review panel's private discussion & Lunchbreak	
13:45 – 14:45	Meeting with representatives of the HE Evaluation Committee and the Committee for Engineering Education HE Evaluation Committee members Committee for EUR-ACE Engineering Education members	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pekka Auvinen, Chair, HE Evaluation Committee (UAS sector) 2. Anne Kumpula, Member, HE Evaluation Committee (university sector) 3. Jaakko Kurhila, Vice-Chair, HE Evaluation Committee (university sector) 4. Ainomaija Raijoo, Member, HE Evaluation Committee (students' representative) 5. Matti Sommerberg, Member HE Evaluation Committee (working life/university sector representative) 6. Camilla Wikström-Grotell, Member, HE Evaluation Committee (UAS sector, Swedish-speaking)

		7. Harri Peuranen, Member, Committee for EUR-ACE Engineering Education
14:45 -15:00	Review panel's private discussion	
15:00 -16:00	Meeting with all FINEEC staff from the Unit of Higher Education	1. Mira Huusko, Senior Evaluation Advisor 2. Kati Isoaho, Senior Evaluation Advisor 3. Sirpa Moitus, Counsellor of Evaluation 4. Mirella Nordblad, Counsellor of Evaluation 5. Niina Nurkka, Senior Evaluation Advisor 6. Hanna Väätäinen, Senior Evaluation Advisor
16:00 -17:00	Wrap-up meeting among panel members and preparations for day II	

TUESDAY 7 SEPT 2021		
TIMING	TOPIC	PERSONS FOR INTERVIEW
10 am	Review panel private meeting	
10:30 –11.30	Meeting with representatives of social partners and main stakeholders	1. Heikki Holopainen, Senior Advisor, Association of Finnish Independent Education Employers 2. Jussi Kivistö, Professor, Higher Education Group, Tampere University 3. Samuli Maxenius, Advisor, ARENE 4. Tanja Risikko, Secretary-General, Unifi 5. Taina Saarinen, Professor, University of Jyväskylä 6. Mikko Vieltojärvi, Adviser, Confederation of Finnish Industries (EK)
11:30 – 11:45	Review panel's private discussion	
11:45 – 12:45	Meeting with the rector representatives	1. Örjan Andersson, Rector, Novia UAS 2. Jari Niemelä, Rector, University of Helsinki 3. Vesa Taatila, Rector, Turku UAS 4. Jaana Sandström, Vice-Rector, LUT University 5. Satu Uusiatti, Vice-Rector, University of Lapland 6. Tapio Määttä, Vice-Rector, University of Eastern Finland
12:45 – 13:45	Review panel's private discussion & Lunchbreak	
13:45 -14:45	Meeting with quality management officers of HEIs	1. Tero Janatuinen, Quality Manager, Jyväskylä UAS 2. Ole Karlsson, Quality Coordinator, Åbo Akademi 3. Marjaana Kivelä, Quality Manager, XAMK UAS 4. Mats Lindholm, Quality Manager, Novia UAS 5. Annikka Nurkka, Quality Manager, LUT University

		6. Kari Seppälä, Quality Manager, University of Turku
14:45 – 15:00	Review panel's private discussion	
15:00 – 16:00	Meeting with the representatives of National Union of University Students in Finland (SYL) and The Union of Students in Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences (SAMOK)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Anniina Sippola, member of HE Evaluation Committee, Higher Education Policy Advisor, SAMOK 2. Annika Nevanpää, President, SYL 3. Oona Löytänen, President, SAMOK 4. Sonja Raitamäki, Secretary General, SYL 5. Armi Murto, Secretary General, SAMOK
16:00 -17:00	Wrap-up meeting among panel members and preparations for day II	

WEDNESDAY 8 SEPT 2021		
TIMING	TOPIC	PERSONS FOR INTERVIEW
10 am	Review panel private meeting	
10:30 – 11:30	Meeting with ministry representatives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Anita Lehikoinen, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education and Culture 2. Atte Jääskeläinen, Director General, Ministry of Education and Culture 3. Birgitta Vuorinen, Director, Ministry of Education and Culture 4. Marjo Vesalainen, Counsellor of Education, Ministry of Education and Culture
11:30 – 11:45	Review panel's private discussion	
11:45 – 12:45	Meeting with FINEEC reviewers (including students)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Helka-Liisa Hentilä, Professor, University of Oulu (audit) 2. Riitta Konkola, Rector, Metropolia UAS (thematic) 3. Kaisa Lähteenmäki-Smith, MDI (audit working life rep) 4. Katri Ojasalo, Vice-Rector, Laurea UAS (audit and thematic) 5. Silvia Schintke, Professor, HEIG-VD (EUR-ACE) 6. Håkan Wiklund, Vice-President, Mid Sweden University (audit) 7. Max Liikka, Tampere University (audit, student rep)
12:45 – 13:45	Lunchbreak	
13:45 – 15:00	Meeting among panel members to agree on final issues to clarify	
15:00 – 16:00	Meeting with the Director and Head of Unit to clarify any pending issues	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Harri Peltoniemi, Director 2. Helka Kekäläinen, Head of Higher Education and Liberal Adult Education Unit
As necessary	Wrap-up meeting among panel members: preparation for day III and provisional conclusions	

THURSDAY 9 SEPT 2021		
TIMING	TOPIC	PERSONS FOR INTERVIEW
10 am	Private meeting among panel members to agree on the main findings	
12:30	Final de-briefing meeting with staff, Management Team and HE Evaluation Committee members of the agency to inform about preliminary findings	Open invitation
13:00	Farewell words	

ANNEX 2: TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE REVIEW

1. Background and context

The Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC) is an independent agency responsible for the evaluation of education in Finland. FINEEC was established in 2014, and it continued the higher education evaluation activities of its predecessor, FINHEEC. FINEEC operates as a separate unit within the Finnish National Agency for Education. It carries out evaluations related to education from early childhood education to higher education. FINEEC's activities are guided by the national education evaluation plan, which describes the evaluation activities during a four-year period.

FINEEC's tasks in relation to higher education are

- to implement evaluations related to the activities of higher education institutions in accordance with the national education evaluation plan;
 - to support higher education institutions in matters concerning evaluation and quality management; • to develop the evaluation of education; and
 - to take care of other tasks that are issued or given to the FINEEC.

Provisions on the duties and organisation of FINEEC are laid down in the Act 1295/2013 and Government decree 1317/2013.

The three key evaluation types in higher education are quality audits, thematic evaluations and EUR-ACE engineering programme accreditations. **Quality audit** is the main method applied in external quality assurance of higher education institutions. The Finnish approach to quality audits is holistic, covering all the activities of the higher education institution, and is based on ESG. The focus of the audit is on the procedures used by the HEI to maintain and enhance the quality of its activities. **Engineering programme accreditation** is a degree programme specific evaluation leading to the international EUR-ACE Label. Accreditations are voluntary for the HEIs and offered as a fee-based service. The **thematic evaluations** are conducted according to the national education evaluation plan. The themes often cover areas that are important from the perspective of educational policy. The aim of thematic evaluations is to produce information to support decision-making and the development of education in Finland. Evaluation methods are tailored according to the objectives and the theme of the evaluation.

FINHEEC, the predecessor of FINEEC, has been a member of ENQA since 2000. FINEEC is now applying for ENQA renewal of membership.

FINHEEC has been registered on the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) since 2010. FINEEC is applying for renewal of EQAR registration.

2. Purpose and scope of the evaluation

This review will evaluate the extent to which FINEEC fulfils the requirements of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). Consequently, the review will provide information to the Board of ENQA to aid its consideration of whether membership of FINEEC should be reconfirmed and to EQAR to support FINEEC application to the register.

2.1 Activities of FINEEC within the scope of the ESG

In order for FINEEC to apply for ENQA membership and for registration in EQAR, this review will analyse all activities of FINEEC that are within the scope of the ESG, i.e. reviews, audits, evaluations or accreditation of higher education institutions or programmes that relate to teaching and learning

(and their relevant links to research and innovation). This is independent of whether the activities are carried out within or outside the EHEA and whether they are obligatory or voluntary.

The following activities of FINEEC have to be addressed in the external review:

- quality audits of higher education institutions
- engineering programme accreditations (EUR-ACE)
- thematic evaluations of higher education.

3. The review process

The review will be conducted following the methodology of ENQA Agency Reviews. The process is designed in line with the Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews and the requirements of the EQAR Procedures for Applications.

The evaluation procedure consists of the following steps:

- Formulation of the draft Terms of Reference for the review;
- Finalising the Terms of Reference for the review following EQAR's Eligibility Confirmation (if relevant);
- Nomination and appointment of the review panel;
- Self-assessment by FINEEC including the preparation and publication of a self-assessment report;
- A site visit by the review panel to FINEEC;
- Preparation and completion of the final evaluation report by the review panel;
- Scrutiny of the final evaluation report by the ENQA Review Committee;
- Analysis of the scrutiny by the Board of ENQA and their decision regarding ENQA membership;
- Follow-up of the panel's and/or the Board's recommendations by the agency, including a voluntary progress visit.

3.1 Nomination and appointment of the review team members

The review panel consists of four members: one or two quality assurance experts (at least one of which is currently employed by an ENQA member agency), an academic employed by a higher education institution, and a student member. One of the members will serve as the chair of the review panel, and another member as a review secretary. For ENQA Agency Reviews at least one of the reviewers is an ENQA nominee (most often the QA professional[s]). At least one of the reviewers is appointed from the nominees of either the European University Association (EUA) or the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE), and the student member is always selected from among the ESU-nominated reviewers. An additional panel member may be included in the panel at the request of the agency under review. In this case, an additional fee to cover the reviewer's fee and travel expenses is applied.

The panel will be supported by the ENQA Secretariat review coordinator who will monitor the integrity of the process and ensure that ENQA's requirements are met throughout the process. The ENQA staff member will not be the secretary of the review and will not participate in the discussions during the site visit interviews.

Current members of the Board of ENQA are not eligible to serve as reviewers. ENQA will provide FINEEC with the list of suggested experts and their respective curricula vitae to establish that there are no known conflicts of interest. The experts will have to sign a non-conflict of interest statement as regards the FINEEC review.

3.2 Self-assessment by FINEEC, including the preparation of a self-assessment report

FINEEC is responsible for the execution and organisation of its own self-assessment process and shall take into account the following guidance:

- Self-assessment is organised as a project with a clearly defined schedule and includes all relevant internal and external stakeholders;
- The self-assessment report is broken down by the topics of the evaluation and is expected to contain, among others: a brief description of the national HE and QA system; background description of the current situation of the Agency; an analysis and appraisal of the current situation; proposals for improvement and measures already planned; a SWOT analysis; each criterion (ESG part II and III) addressed individually. All agency's QA activities (whether within their national jurisdiction or outside of it, and whether obligatory or voluntary) will be described and their compliance with the ESG analysed.
- The report is well-structured, concise and comprehensively prepared. It clearly demonstrates the extent to which FINEEC fulfils its tasks of external quality assurance and meets the ESG and thus the requirements of ENQA membership.
- The self-assessment report is submitted to the ENQA Secretariat which has four weeks to pre-scrutinise it before forwarding the report to the panel of experts. The purpose of the pre-scrutiny is to ensure that the self-assessment report is satisfactory for the consideration of the panel. The Secretariat will not judge the content of information itself but whether the necessary information, as stated in the Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews, is present. For the second and subsequent reviews, the agency is expected to enlist the recommendations provided in the previous review and to outline actions taken to meet these recommendations. In case the self-assessment report does not contain the necessary information and fails to respect the requested form and content, the ENQA Secretariat reserves the right to reject the report and ask for a revised version within two weeks. In such cases, an additional fee of 1000 EUR will be charged to the agency.
- The report is submitted to the review panel a minimum of six weeks prior to the site visit.

3.3 A site visit by the review panel

The review panel will draft a proposal of the site visit schedule which shall be submitted to the agency at least two months before the planned dates of the visit. The schedule is to include an indicative timetable of the meetings and other exercises to be undertaken by the review panel during the site visit, the duration of which is usually 2,5 days. The approved schedule shall be given to FINEEC at least one month before the site visit, in order to properly organise the requested interviews.

The review panel will be assisted by FINEEC in arriving in Helsinki, Finland.

The site visit will close with a final de-briefing meeting outlining the panel's overall impressions but not its judgement on the ESG compliance of the agency or the granting or reconfirmation of ENQA membership.

3.4 Preparation and completion of the final evaluation report

On the basis of the review panel's findings, the review secretary will draft the report in consultation with the review panel. The report will take into account the purpose and scope of the evaluation as defined under articles 2 and 2.1. It will also provide a clear rationale for its findings concerning each ESG. A draft will first be submitted to the ENQA review coordinator who will check the report for consistency, clarity and language, and it will be then submitted to FINEEC usually within 10 weeks of the site visit for comment on factual accuracy. If FINEEC chooses to provide a position statement in reference to the draft report, it will be submitted to the chair of the review panel within two weeks after the receipt of the draft report. Thereafter, the review panel will take into account the statement by FINEEC and finalise and submit the document to ENQA.

The report is to be finalised within three months of the site visit and will normally not exceed 40 pages in length.

When preparing the report, the review panel should also bear in mind the EQAR Policy on the Use and Interpretation of the ESG to ensure that the report will contain sufficient information for the Register Committee for application to EQAR.

For the purpose of applying for ENQA membership, FINEEC is also requested to provide a letter addressed to the Board of ENQA outlining its motivation for applying for membership and the ways in which FINEEC expects to contribute to the work and objectives of ENQA during its membership. This letter will be taken into consideration by the Board of ENQA together with the final evaluation report when deciding on the agency's membership.

4. Follow-up process and publication of the report

FINEEC will receive the expert panel's report and publish it on its website once the Board of ENQA has made its decision. The report will also be published on the ENQA website, regardless of the review outcome and decision by the Board. FINEEC commits to preparing a follow-up plan in which it addresses the recommendations of the review panel and to submitting a follow-up report to the Board of ENQA within the timeframe indicated in the Board's decision on membership. The follow-up report will be published on the ENQA website, in addition to the full review report and the Board's decision.

The follow-up report could be complemented by a small-scale progress visit to the agency performed by two members of the original panel (whenever possible). This visit will be used to discuss issues, based on the ESG, considered to be of particular importance or a challenge to FINEEC. Its purpose is entirely developmental and has no impact on the judgement of membership and/or judgment of compliance of the agency with the ESG.

FINEEC opts out of the progress visit.

5. Use of the report

ENQA shall retain ownership of the report. The intellectual property of all works created by the expert panel in connection with the review contract, including specifically any written reports, shall be vested in ENQA.

The review report is used by the Board of ENQA for the purpose of reaching a conclusion on whether FINEEC is in compliance with the ESG and can thus be admitted/reconfirmed as a member of ENQA. The report can also be used for registration on EQAR, and is designed to serve these two purposes. However, the review report is to be considered final only after being approved by the Board. Once submitted to ENQA and until it is approved by the Board, the report may not be used or relied upon by FINEEC, the panel, or any third party and may not be disclosed without the prior written consent of ENQA. The approval of the report is independent of the decision of the ENQA Board on membership.

6. Budget

FINEEC shall pay the review related fees as specified in the contract between ENQA and FINEEC.

It is understood that the fee of the progress visit is included in the overall cost of the review and will not be reimbursed despite the agency decided not to benefit from it.

In the event of a second site visit required by the board of ENQA and aiming at completing the assessment of compliance, and should the agency accept a second visit, an additional fee of 500 EUR per expert, as well as the travel and subsistence costs related to the second site visit will be charged to the agency.

7. Indicative schedule of the review

Agreement on terms of reference June 2020

Appointment of review panel members January 2021

Self-assessment completed 31 May 2021

Pre-screening of SAR by ENQA coordinator June 2021

Preparation of site visit schedule and indicative timetable Start in June 2021 (finalisation in August 2021)

Briefing of review panel members August 2021

Review panel site visit Early-September 2021

Draft of evaluation report and submitting it to ENQA coordinator for pre-screening

End-October 2021

Draft of evaluation report to FINEEC November 2021

Statement of FINEEC to review panel if necessary December 2021

Submission of final report to ENQA January 2022

Consideration of the report by Board of ENQA February 2022

Publication of report February 2022

ANNEX 3: GLOSSARY

Arene	Rectors' Conference of Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences
EDUFI	Finnish National Agency for Education
ENAAE	European Network for Accreditation of Engineering Education
ENQA	The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
EQA	External quality assurance
ESG	Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area
ESU	European Students' Union
EUR-ACE	EUROpean- ACCredited Engineer
FINEEC	Finnish Education Evaluation Centre
FINHEEC	Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council
HE	higher education
HEI	higher education institution
MEC	Ministry of Education and Culture of Finland
QA	quality assurance
SAMOK	Universities of Applied Sciences Students in Finland – SAMOK
SAR	Self-assessment report
SYL	National Union of University Students in Finland
UAS	University of applied sciences
Unifi	Universities Finland

ANNEX 4. DOCUMENTS TO SUPPORT THE REVIEW

DOCUMENTS PROVIDED BY FINEEC

Acts and Decrees

Act Amending the Universities Act (1367/2018). Available in Finnish and Swedish
<https://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/alkup/2018/20181367>.

Act Amending the Universities of Applied Sciences Act (1368/2018). Available in Finnish and Swedish
<https://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/alkup/2018/20181368>.

Act on the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (1295/2013). Available in
<https://karvi.fi/app/uploads/2016/05/3-Act-on-FINEEC.pdf>

Act on the National Framework for Qualifications and Other Competence Modules (93/2017). Available in Finnish and Swedish <https://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/ajantasa/2017/20170093>

Decree of the Ministry of Education and Culture on payment for the services of the Finnish National Agency for Education (87/2020). Available in Finnish and Swedish
<https://finlex.fi/fi/laki/alkup/2020/20200087>

Government Decree on Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (1317/2013).
<https://karvi.fi/app/uploads/2016/05/4-Decree-on-FINEEC.pdf102>

Government Decree on the Framework for Qualifications and Other Competence Modules (120/2017). Available in Finnish and Swedish <https://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/ajantasa/2017/20170120>

Government Decree on University Degrees (794/2004). Available at
<https://finlex.fi/en/laki/kaannokset/2004/en20040794>

Universities Act (558/2009). <https://www.finlex.fi/en/laki/kaannokset/2009/en20090558>

Universities of Applied Sciences Act (932/2014).
<https://www.finlex.fi/en/laki/kaannokset/2014/en20140932>

Evaluation manuals and national education evaluation plans

FINEEC (2015). FINEEC standards and procedures for engineering programme accreditation. Available at <https://karvi.fi/en/publication/standards-and-procedures-for-engineering-programme-accreditation-2/>

FINEEC (2016). National Plan for Education Evaluations 2016–2019. Available at
<https://karvi.fi/app/uploads/2016/06/National-Plan-for-Education-Evaluations-2016-2019.pdf>

FINEEC (2019). Audits of higher education institutions 2019–2024. Available at
https://karvi.fi/app/uploads/2019/09/FINEEC_Audit-manual-for-higher-education-institutions_2019-2024_FINAL.pdf

FINEEC (2021). National Education Evaluation Plan 2020–2023. Available at
https://karvi.fi/app/uploads/2021/05/KARVI_National_educational_plan_2020-2023.pdf

Quality audit process descriptions and other audit-related documents/websites

[Principles of online implementation 2020-2024 \(addendum to the audit manual\)](#)

[Quality Label for Excellence – procedure and criteria](#)

[Re-audit process 2019-2024](#)

[Appeals procedure](#)

[Audit platform/ third cycle audit reports](#)

[Audit register for higher education institutions](#)

[Enhancement-led evaluation in FINEEC audits - poster](#)

Examples of thematic analyses

Nordblad, M., Apajalahti, T., Huusko, M. & Seppälä, H. (2020). Quality in focus. Quality audits of Finnish higher education institutions 2012–2018. Available at https://karvi.fi/app/uploads/2019/04/FINEEC_T0920.pdf

Pyykkö, R., Kivistö, J., Pirttilä, A., Wallenius, J., Huusko, M., Leppänen, O., Mustonen, K. & Nordblad, M. (2020). Entering working life with a high level of competence. Evaluations of higher education in humanities, business, technology and social sciences. Available at https://karvi.fi/app/uploads/2020/01/FINEEC_T0320.pdf

OTHER SOURCES USED BY THE REVIEW PANEL

General FINEEC website

ENQA AGENCY REVIEW 2022

THIS REPORT presents findings of the ENQA Agency Review of the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC), undertaken in 2021.

enqa.

European Association for
Quality Assurance in Higher Education